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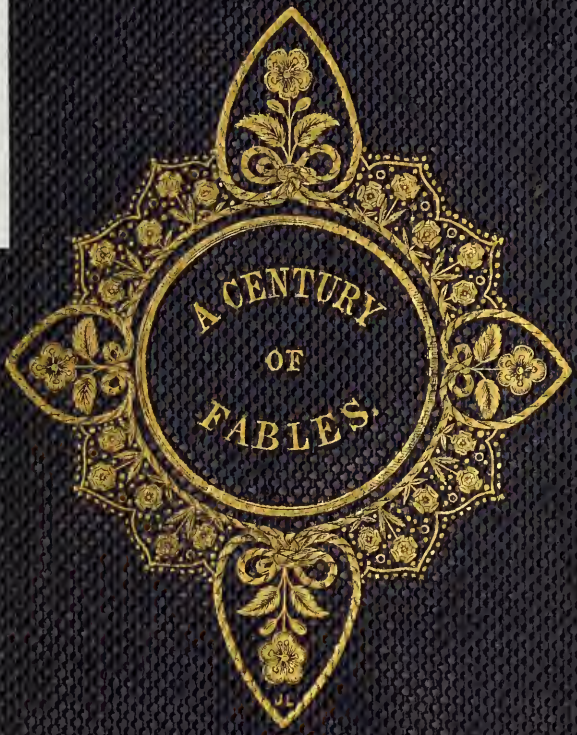

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A Century of Fables.

IN VERSE.

FOR THE MOST PART PARAPHRASED OR IMITATED

FROM VARIOUS LANGUAGES.

By W. R. EVANS.

" Duplex libelli dos est: quod risum movet;
Et quod prudenti vitam consilio monet."
PHÆD. *Fab.*

" Beloved as Fable, yet believed as Truth."
BULWER-LYTTON.

LONDON:
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1860.

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TO

THE RIGHT HON.

THE LORD BROUGHAM,

Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF KIND ENCOURAGEMENT

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

960378

PREFACE.

This unpretending Work is offered to the public, not as the mature and studied production of a professed author, but merely as the fruit of literary recreation to which the Writer has been enabled to devote himself in the restricted leisure which a journeyman printer may enjoy; or perhaps he might be permitted to say, as the precursory blossoms of a fruit which he trusts may subsequently develop itself.

Attached to the study of languages, for philological purposes, the fruit of this study the Author hopes to exhibit hereafter in the form of scientific writings. Meanwhile, with, as he believes, some natural or acquired aptitude for versification, but lacking that poetical imagination which would enable him to produce original verse of much worth, he has varied his severer studies, from time to time, by rendering into English metre any attractive foreign poems met with in his reading, when they were not of such length as to distract his attention from more solid employment.

By this means he has accumulated a number of metrical translations (some of which have appeared in "Beautiful Poetry" and other Magazines); and among these, some months ago, he possessed a number of Fables,—a species of composition to which he had ever been partial.

These Fables were twenty or more in number; and to them the Author resolved to add sufficient to constitute a collection which might assume the form of a small volume, and, after some further progress, fixed the number he would translate at one hundred, to be published under the title of this work.

But in proceeding to carry out this intention, he found himself constrained to modify his original plan of merely translating from poetical versions, and of admitting only such Fables as were almost or entirely unknown to English readers; for, in following this method, he could scarcely have obtained a hundred Fables, even from collections containing thousands, equal to his proposed standard of excellence. Therefore, extending his field of selection, he began to cull from prose as well as poetical authors, even including, in some few instances, English authors of the former class, and making new metrical versions of various Fables which have long been popular in a prose dress;

but, as far as he knew, he always avoided competition with any popular translator or adapter.

While increasing his stock of materials, the Author also found it advisable to vary his mode of dealing with them; that is to say, instead of merely translating even in a free manner, he began to paraphrase, imitate, or adapt; and in some cases wrote Fables which had little but the moral in common with those by which they were suggested.

In short, his object has not been to represent authors, but to present Fables in the best English form he could; and he hopes that in general the marks of the translator will not be found upon his work. If he has not succeeded in so thoroughly anglicizing his originals as to obliterate all traces of alien diction or habits of thought, he has failed in his purpose; but if his more critical readers, on perusal of a Fable previously unfamiliar to them, should turn to the Table of Contents to discover the primary author and his language, the Writer would feel this a cause for self-gratulation. In this table he has sought to define the obligations under which he lies to various writers; attributing to them the invention of the story, while often claiming for himself the authorship of the poem, whatever credit may be attached to this.

It is not pretended, however, that the authors mentioned are in all cases the original inventors of the Fables attributed to them. Often the same Fable has been found in several collections, without any acknowledgment of one author to another. In fact, Fabulists have not been in the habit of confessing their debts; and even a wide acquaintance with foreign literature, and a chronological knowledge which the writer of this volume does not possess, would scarcely avail to apportion each his dues. The proximate sources of the Fables have, therefore, only been indicated.

The ultimate pecuniary object of the present publication, should it haply enjoy sufficient success, is to provide means for the purchase of works which the Author needs for the further prosecution of his studies. Holding, and having held for some few years, a situation in a superior department of his calling—namely, as a corrector of the press*—he is not necessitated to resort to authorship in order to

* At the office of Messrs. Cox and Wyman, where this book has been printed, and which has had the honour of employing, among other celebrated members of the printing trade, Benjamin Franklin, Douglas Jerrold, and Laman Blanchard; and has also within the Author's limited period of service retained among its workmen at least half a dozen, previously, simultaneously, or subsequently, authors of works, or writers for the periodical press.

procure a respectable livelihood. But as still a printer, and as the son of a journeyman carpenter and joiner yet working in that capacity, he claims for his book whatever consideration and indulgence may be due to the production of one who in his youth received no higher education than a working man's son might then attain, and who at the age of thirteen commenced his own career of labour, and has had to exercise his literary pursuits after the performance of his daily employment, and amid the distractions of domestic life.

To those Noblemen, Ladies, and Gentlemen who have so kindly countenanced the Author's efforts by ordering copies of this volume, and whose names he is proud to append thereto, he begs to tender his sincere thanks. He only hopes it may be deemed in some measure worthy of their support. The aggregate amount of their subscriptions will go far towards preventing any loss upon the publication; and the kind recommendations of those who may approve the contents of the work, and who have leisure to give it the benefit of their influence, will doubtless increase its sale to an extent which will at least repay the outlay, if it should not leave a profit applicable to the intended object.

In the event of the book enjoying such a degree of favour as to warrant its author in again appearing before the public, he would seek their support for a volume of miscellaneous poetical translations, a few of which have already received the honour of publication in various periodicals; but if this venture, on the contrary, should not attain that success which would warrant him in attempting a second of a similar nature, he must be content with devoting his leisure solely to grammatical and philological writings, for which he has accumulated various materials, and in which some seven years ago, in the latter years of his apprenticeship, he made a humble beginning, as well as in his attempts at versification, in the Students' Page of the "Home Circle," under the signature of

Ein Yôm Li.

15, Seymour Street, N.W.
December, 1859.

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TABLE

SHOWING THE NATIONALITY OF THE AUTHORS MENTIONED IN THE CONTENTS.

Æsop	*Greek.*
Bertola	*Italian.*
Bidpai	*Hindoo.*
Claudius	*German.*
De Rossi	*Italian.*
Florian	*French.*
Gellert	*German.*
Gleim	*German.*
Grillo	*Italian.*
Iriarte	*Spanish.*
Lachambeaudie	*French.*
La Fontaine	*French.*
Lessing	*German.*
Lokman	*Arabic.*
Perrin	*French.*
Pfeffel	*German.*
Phædrus	*Latin.*
Ramler	*German.*
Saadi	*Persian.*
Schmid	*German.*
Schmitt	*German.*
Victor Hugo	*French.*
Willamow	*German.*

A CENTURY OF FABLES.

I.

Truth and Fiction.

When long in hiding Truth had lain,
One day she left her Well again,*
And, naked as of yore, began
To seek a resting-place with man.
But young and old, where'er she came,
Retired before her, crying "Shame!"
And none would greet the ancient maid,
Whose charms, alas! began to fade.
Thus as she wander'd on her way,
She met with Fiction, smart and gay,—
A favorite now, and richly drest
In silks and velvets of the best,

* For the benefit of some youthful readers, I may state, that the ancients feigned Truth to have hidden at the bottom of a Well, whither she had fled from men's ill-treatment.

And trimm'd with gems, that seem'd as bright,
Though mostly false, as true ones might.
"Good day," said Fiction; "how d'you do?
Why walk you so exposed to view?"—
"Alas!" said Truth, "I seek to gain
Some quiet refuge, but in vain.
Men leave me houseless, sad, and cold;
For none will harbour one so old."—
"Why," answer'd Fiction, "as to age,
You scarce exceed me I'll engage;
But what with dress, and all that decks
The fading members of our sex,
I still am courted as in youth.
And let me tell you, Madam Truth,
That people think you rather rude
In thus appearing wholly nude.
What say you—will you be my friend?
Let our respective interests blend:
You seek to teach, and I to charm;
Come let us wander arm in arm.
Beneath my mantle you will find
A good reception from mankind,
While in return you lend to me
A little of your dignity.
As my companion you'll obtain
A hearing with the fools and vain;
While I shall win, by leading you,
Attention from the prudent few.
Let me adorn the tale, my friend,—
You point the moral at the end."

As Fiction ceased, Truth gave assent,
And thus in company they went.

This fable shows how fables grew
From union of the false and true.

II.

The Flight of the Ostrich.

"I'm going to fly!" the Ostrich cried,
And flapp'd his wings with swelling pride.
The birds flock'd round from every part,
And waited to behold him start.
"I'm going to fly!" again he said;
And then with pinions widely spread,
As runs a ship with crowded sail
Before a favorable gale,
He skimm'd the ground with nimble pace,
But never rose above its face.

Such ostriches we often find,
In men of heavy, prosy mind,
Who talk when they begin to write
Of soaring in poetic flight,
And threaten to invade the skies,
Yet never from the dust can rise.

III.

The Donkey's Voice.

"A hapless fate, alas, is mine!"
The Donkey sigh'd one day.
"On straw or thistles I must dine,
Without a bit of hay.

"And as to corn, there's none for me,
As far as eating goes;
For much as on my back may be,
There's none before my nose.

"From summer heat or winter cold
Small shelter I obtain;
And all my days, from young to old,
I lead a life of pain.

"Upon the common in my youth
Boys would not let me rest;
And now, alas! by men uncouth
I'm beaten and opprest.

"But while so much the fates deny,
I cannot but rejoice,
To think that of all creatures I
Have far the finest voice."

Like donkeys we may oft detect
Among the human race,
Who look upon their worst defect
As an unequall'd grace.

IV.

The Lark and the Greenfinch.

Beside a door two cages hung:
From one a Lark's clear music rung;
A Greenfinch twitter'd in the other;
When, passing near them with his mother,
A little boy delighted heard
The tones of the melodious bird.
"Come," said his mother, "can you say
Which bird is trilling that rich lay?"—
"Oh," cried the child, "the one in green,
The prettiest bird I've ever seen;
For surely that, which looks so plain,
Could never sing so sweet a strain!"—
"Nay, child," the mother said, "you're wrong;
'Tis he pours forth that thrilling song.
Look closely now,—see how his throat
Is quivering with each rising note;
And never judge of birds or men
By outside finery again."

V.

The Swan and the Crows.

Clad in plumage white as snow,
On a lake a Swan was sailing;
On the margin stood a Crow,
At the stately creature railing:

"Pretty goose you look, I'm sure,
In your glaring feathers, madam!
Call 'em chaste, forsooth, and pure!
Should be sorry if I had 'em."

So the saucy Crow went on,
Of the swimmer's beauty jealous,
Calling to behold the Swan
Quite a dozen of her fellows.

Then, while some began to prate
In their vulgar Crowish chatter,
Some were mimicking her gait,
Others making faces at her.

But the noble-minded bird
Calmly floated by the rabble,
Deigning not to say a word
In reply to all their gabble.

Cried an ugly-looking Crow,
Very old and very sooty:
"See, there's nice black mud below;
Let us paint the pretty beauty!"

So, to vent their envious ire,
Filling up their beaks, they flutter'd
Round their victim, and the mire
O'er her plumage thickly sputter'd.

Then the old malicious jade,
Seeing their success in tainting
All the fair white feathers, said:
"Ain't we first-rate hands at painting!"

When at last the work was done
To the painters' satisfaction,
To the bank they one by one
Fled to chuckle o'er their action.

But the meek, insulted Swan,
Diving down beneath the water,
Rose, as they were looking on,
Fairer than they ever thought her,—

Saying: "You perceive, the slime
That you dabbled in, poor creatures,
Serves at present to begrime,
Not myself, but your own features."

Human crows with slander's mud
Vainly smear your reputation;
Time will prove the cleansing flood
To undo the operation.

VI.

The Idiot by the Brook.

An Idiot-boy, with earnest look,
Stood gazing on a little brook.
"Lad," said an old man passing by,
Who mark'd the stripling's steadfast eye,
"Why gaze you so upon the stream?"
The youth look'd up; a fitful gleam
Of half-intelligence o'erspread
His simple features, as he said:
"I'm going over, but shall stay
Till all the water runs away."—
"You'd stay your life," the man replied,
"And yet not reach the other side;
For long as time this brook will flow,
And you must wade, if you would go."

So, reader, stand not looking on,
Till difficulty's waves be gone;
But wade or swim through brook or river;
For they will flow and flow for ever.

VII.

The Fox and the Crane.

A Fox, who in some poaching fray
Had been severely wounded, lay,
With none to aid him, at the brink
Of death for want of food and drink;
And long he moan'd for aid in vain,
When passing near he saw a Crane,
And begg'd her in her pouch to bring
Some water from a neighbouring spring,
To quench his burning thirst, and save
A friend from an untimely grave.
When he had drunk, with strength renew'd,
He might proceed in search of food.
"Not far in search, my worthy *friend!*"
Replied the Crane: "were I to lend
My aid to carry thee the drink,
The food would come with me, I think."

A knave, for perfidy renown'd,
In real woe has often found
That none, to succour him, would dare
The chance of meeting with a snare.

VIII.

The Fly and the Moth.

As round a room a Fly career'd
One summer night
By candle-light,
And in his passage peer'd
With curious look
In every nook,
He saw a glass of honey placed
Upon a shelf,
And set himself
Upon the rim to have a taste;
But in the glass
He found, alas!
Too low to reach the honey lay.
Still from so rare
And rich a fare
He would not lightly turn away.
Awhile he stopp'd,
Then softly dropp'd
Down lower for a nearer look,
Until his feet
Were on the sweet,
And then a trial sip he took.
This was so nice,
That in a trice,

Deep in he plunged his eager trunk;
But now he found
Himself half drown'd,
And as he struggled deeper sunk,
Until at last
His feet were fast
Entangled as a bird's in lime.
A Moth came by,
And saw him lie,
And chid him thus in tone sublime:
"It serves you right
That such a plight
You should be in, O greedy fool!
The fault 's your own,
You should have known
'Tis best to act by reason's rule,
Nor let desire
Your deeds inspire."
Thus having said, away he went,
And left the Fly
Alone to die,
With none to aid him, or lament
So sad a fate
Should him await.
Not long the Moth had held his way
In circles wide,
When he espied
A lamp that on a table lay;
Then nearer drew
For better view,

And play'd and flutter'd round the light,
Until he came
Close to the flame,
With giddy brain and dazzled sight;
And then, at last
All caution past,
He madly flew into the fire,
And straightway fell,
Burnt to a shell,
Upon the table to expire.
The captive Fly,
Who lay hard by,
Imprison'd still, but not yet dead,
Perceived the Moth
Upon the cloth
In death's last agonies, and said:
"Can it be true,
Poor wretch! that you,
Who preach'd to me awhile ago,
For just the same
Are now to blame
As what in me you censured so!
You more than I
Deserve to die:
If all your actions you had learn'd,
From my sad fate,
To regulate
By reason, you had not been burn'd
Through your desire
To play with fire."—

And now the moral need I write?
That death oft lies
In specious guise
Where we discover but delight;
That sense is blind,
When by the mind
Not well directed and controll'd;
And, secondly,
That none should be
To blame another's faults too bold
Ere he corrects
His own defects.

IX.

The Fox and the Mask.

One day of old a Fox had found
A hollow mask upon the ground,
Such as by ancient actors worn,
In which a gaping mouth was torn:
"Oh, what a head! no brain inside,
And yet a mouth extremely wide!
It must be," cried the subtle Fox,
"The cranium of a chatterbox."

The sly brute knew you, it appears,
Chastisers of our harmless ears.

X.

The Dancing-Bear.

A Bear, that long-time had been led
About to dance for daily bread,
Escaped, and sought his native wold,
Where bears he'd known in days of old
Met him with brotherly embrace,
And growl'd the tidings through the place;
And when a bear another spied,
"Friend Peto's here again!" he cried.
Then quite a crowd began to meet,
Their old associate to greet,
Who all were "glad to see him well,"
And bid him his adventures tell.
So, with preliminary "Hem!"
His travels he described to them;
Told what he'd done, and where he'd been,
And what he'd heard, and what he'd seen;
And as a dancer, how his *pas* *
Had everywhere obtain'd applause;
And then, some notion to impart
Of the Terpsichorean art,
Upon his hinder legs he stood,
And danced before the multitude.
The bears look'd on in mute surprise,

---

* Lege, si mavis, *paws*.

And scarcely could believe their eyes;
But when awhile they had admired,
To imitate they next aspired.
But 'twould have made you laugh to view
The efforts of the clumsy crew;
For strive and struggle as they might,
But few could hold themselves upright;
And those who made a single bound
Measured their length upon the ground.
At last they found 'twas all in vain
Their joints to jerk and strength to strain;
And, vexed at failure so complete
In mimicking the dancer's feat,*
Began, first one and then another,
Abusing their accomplish'd brother.
"Go, slave," said one, "and play again
Thy paltry tricks among the men!"—
"We want none here," another cried,
"Our native manners to deride!"—
"Our limbs," a third said, "shall we school
To uncouth antics, like this fool?"
And as their spite and anger rose,
They drove him from the place with blows.

The Dancing-Bear was grieved to find
His fellow-brutes so like mankind:
It was a fault of men, he knew,
To rail at what they could not do.

---

* Lege hic etiam, si mavis, *fœt.*

XI.

The Nightingale and the Owl.

In a lonely thicket singing,
Sat a Nightingale,
Floods of gushing music flinging
O'er the dusky dale.

None could hear the lay melodious
Save a sombre Owl,
Who, intent on murder odious,
Wander'd like a ghoul.

Said the rover: "What can move thee,
Noisy, witless thing!
Thus by night, while none approve thee,
All alone to sing?"

But the Nightingale, discreetly,
Answer'd not a word;
Only caroll'd on more sweetly
For the scoffs he heard:

As he would have told the pirate,
In each thrilling chord,
Virtue, though none may admire it,
Is its own reward.

XII.

The Lion, the Ass, and the Fox.

The Lion once took, out of whim,
The Ass and Fox to hunt with him.
They coursed the forest to and fro,
Until they slew a fine fat doe.
"Now, Donkey," said the Monarch, "share
The booty as thou thinkest fair."
The Ass obey'd, and tore the food
In three as justly as he could.
Then "Here is yours," he meekly said,
"Your Majesty," and bow'd his head.
"What, dolt!" exclaimed the King, "to me
Thou offerest least of all the three!
Thou diest!" and with a fierce blow
He laid the trembling Donkey low.
"Come, Master Renard," then he cried,
"Thou hast a conscience; pray, divide."
Fox took himself a bit of breast,
And gave the Lion all the rest.
"That's right," the despot said; "but tell,
Who taught thee to divide so well?"—
"The Ass," said Renard, "at your feet,
Has taught your slave to be discreet."

From other men's misfortunes learn
Not to incur such in your turn.

XIII.

The Horse and the Bull.

Upon a proud high-mettled Steed
A Boy was coursing through a mead.
"Oh, shame on you," a fierce Bull cried,
"To let that little youngster ride
Upon your back, when one good bound
Might lay him sprawling on the ground!"—
"But I would scorn," replied the Horse,
"So meanly to exert my force;
For what renown should I enjoy
From flinging off a little Boy?"

Scorn, reader, like the Horse, to seek
Revenge upon the small and weak.

XIV.

The Two Frogs.

In a pool two Frogs resided,
Where the water fast subsided
From a long-continued drought,
Till at last evaporation
So impair'd their habitation
That another must be sought.

So they started off together,
Seeking, but much doubting, whether
  Water might on earth be found;
And, indeed, they wander'd many
Miles ere they discover'd any
  In the dry and heated ground.

But at last a well espying,
Where some water still was lying
  At the bottom rather deep,
"This will suit our purpose, brother,"
Said the one Frog to the other,
  And prepared himself to leap.

"Hold," exclaim'd his friend, "a minute!
Think before you venture in it,
  That the water lieth low;
And if moisture here should fail us,
All our strength would not avail us
  When we found it time to go."

Learn this lesson from my fable:
Ne'er for benefit unstable
  Put the future in suspense;
Let not present satisfaction
Tempt you to commit an action
  Ere you weigh the consequence.

XV.

The Hunters and the Bear.

Two Hunters, having understood
That somewhere in a neighbouring wood
A huge and savage-looking Bear
For several weeks had made his lair,
One morning went to hunt the brute;
But spent the day in vain pursuit,
For though they met his tracks around,
The Bear himself could not be found.

Night came; and, wearied with the chase,
They sought an inn hard-by the place,
Intending there to spend the night,
And start afresh with morning light.
They call'd for supper, call'd for beer,
And soon grew merry with their cheer;
But having nought to pay the cost
They pledged a pistol with mine host,
Till they could slay the Bear next day,
And sell his precious skin to pay.

Next morning, with the rising dew,
They started to the chase anew;
But pass'd another day of toil,
And came again without the spoil
To seek the tavern as before,
And more than doubled last night's score,

Convinced they couldn't fail to kill
The Bear next day to pay the bill.
The morrow morn they rose at four,
And starting on their search once more,
Had not been wandering long about,
Before the one began to shout:
"Look, comrade! look! be quick—prepare
For battle! yonder comes the Bear!"
And truly, crashing through the wood,
Some hundred yards from where they stood,
The long-sought Bear appear'd at last,
And near'd the ardent Hunters fast,
But fiercely growling as he came.
One Hunter, firing, miss'd his aim;
And running off with all his might,
Climb'd up an oak-tree out of sight,
The other man prepared to shoot,
And pull'd the trigger on the brute—
But pull'd in vain; the piece hung fire,
And left him powerless to retire:
For Bruin charged him as he shot,
Not fifty paces from the spot.
Down fell the Hunter, held his breath,
And closely counterfeited death.
The Bear came up, and then began,
To smell about the frighten'd man.
He sniff'd his ear, and sniff'd his nose,
And then his hair, and then his clothes;

And thinking he was really dead,
Retired at last with stately tread
(For bears, as probably you know,
Will never rend a lifeless foe).
The Hunter who had climb'd the oak
Came down at length, and said in joke:
"Tell me, when Bruin stood so near,
What was he whispering in your ear?"—
"Oh," said his friend, "he told me then,
If I should hunt a bear again,
To kill the animal before
I went to sell the skin he wore."

XVI.

The Jackdaw and the Peacocks.

A young Jackdaw one morning saw
A group of Peacocks on his way,
And, quite amazed, he stood and gazed
On their magnificent array.

He thought he yet had never met
With plumage of such lovely dyes,
And much desired to be attired
In that incomparable guise.

Now close beside by chance he spied
A feather by a Peacock shed,
Which with a smile he scann'd awhile,
And then a thought came in his head.

He took the sleek plume in his beak,
And stuck it in his tail with care;
Then look'd around till he had found
Some dozen more, and placed them there.

When this was done, he thought that one
Of that gay race he should be thought,
And so elate, with strutting gait,
Their company at once he sought.

But in surprise they bent their eyes
Upon the Daw as he came near;
And scarce it took a second look,
Before the bare-faced trick was clear.

They throng'd about him with a shout,
And pluck'd his borrow'd plumes away,
And half his own, that he had grown,
Till crippled on the ground he lay.

From what occurr'd to this vain bird
Learn to submit to nature's law,
And not assume the Peacock's plume
If fate has made you but a Daw.

XVII.

The Flower and the Cloud.

In one of summer's burning days,
When Sol sent forth his fiercest rays,
A little Flower, whose feeble breath
Betoken'd fast approaching death,
While gazing languidly on high
Beheld a Cloud come floating by,
And begg'd him earnestly to shed
A little moisture on her head—
A gentle shower, to allay
Her thirst, and save her from decay.
The Cloud replied: "I cannot stop
Just now to give a single drop:
I've pressing business with the Sun,
But will return here when it's done."
He went his way, and in an hour
The heat had killed the panting Flow'r.
The Cloud return'd, as he had said;
And when he saw her lying dead,
Pour'd down a plenteous shower of rain
Upon her—now, alas! in vain.

How oft a man of sterling worth,
Whose works were fragrance to the earth,
In his adversity has pray'd
The wealthy for a little aid,

And been compell'd to starve and wait,
Until the help has come too late;
When gold on which he might have thriven
For years, had it been timely given,
At last has lavishly been spent
To build him a proud monument.

XVIII.

The Loire and the Ocean.

Arriving near its mouth, the Loire exclaim'd :
"Upon my bosom ships I bear,
Despising streams, and rivers wrongly named,
That cannot with myself compare."
But Ocean knew the boaster's humble source,
And thus indignantly replied :
"These modest streams and brooks, that in their course
Their limpid waters have supplied
To swell thy grandeur, and thus lost their name—
Vain Loire! 'tis they have made thy power and fame.'

And so in authorship, a haughty few
Roll their wide streams of thought along,
Forgetting oft how much thereof is due
To fellow-labourers in the throng.

XIX.

The Old Man and Death.

'Neath a load of firewood bending,
Homeward wearisomely wending,
Came an old Man, tottering, stumbling,
Through an ancient wood, and grumbling,
That the weight was great and tiring,
Yet would yield him few days' firing;
That he felt him well-nigh dropping,
And awhile must think of stopping.
Then on earth his burden setting,
Down he sat, at once forgetting
All his misery in listening
To the birds, his dim eye glistening
As he thought of life's glad morning,
Which would never know returning,
When he oft had gone birdnesting
In the wood where he was resting,
Thoughtlessly the young birds taking,
Though their parents' hearts were breaking.
Thence on youth and manhood pondering
For a while his thoughts were wandering,
In his revery never heeding
How the time away was speeding,
Till the evening shades were falling.
Then, at last his thoughts recalling.
He awoke to time less pleasing;
And upon his bundle seizing,

Strove to raise it ; but his failing
Strength was spent in unavailing
Efforts ; for, with all his shifting,
He could not succeed in lifting
To his back the load tormenting ;
So began his old lamenting
At his fate so hard and galling,
In beseeching accents calling
Upon Death, his aid conjuring,
Seeing life was past enduring.
To a mortal's prayer replying
For a wonder, Death came flying
To the spot ; and there alighting,
Said : "I come at thy inviting,
To thy wish at once acceding,
And would know what thou art needing."
But the Man, with terror shivering,
Stammer'd out in accents quivering :
"O kind sir, forgive my daring !
I implore thee, be forbearing ;
I was but thine aid requiring
To uplift this load of firing."

People under trouble smarting
May desire the final parting
From a world of pain and grieving,
When there's little chance of leaving ;
But if Death appear'd complying,
It would but increase their sighing.

XX.

The Miser and the Magpie.

An aged Miser had a hoard
Of guineas hid beneath a board
Within the garret where he dwelt;
And on the floor he often knelt
To raise the board and count his store,
Or add at times a little more.

One day a Magpie that he kept,
Along the flooring slily crept,
And from the heap a guinea stole,
Then ran to hide it in a hole.
The Miser saw the robber's trick,
And catching up his walking-stick,
He hobbled after him, and cried:
"Accursed thief, my gold to hide!
And thou hast taken much, no doubt,
Ere I have chanced to find thee out;
For what I have, in spite of all
My saving, still is very small.
But, now I've caught thee in the fact,
Thy life is forfeit for the act!"—

"Nay, master," cried the bird, "I vow
I've taken nothing until now."—

"It matters not," the Miser said,
"For this offence I'll break thy head."

"But think," rejoined the bird, "if I
For hiding one coin ought to die,
You richly merit such a fate
For having hidden sums so great!"

A fault in others men will blame,
When they have often done the same.

XXI.

The Fox and the Oak.

A RAGING wind with sudden stroke,
One night tore down a lofty Oak,
Whose broken boughs lay spread around,
And cover'd many yards of ground.
A Fox, who had been out all night,
Was hastening with the morning light
To seek his cover near the tree.
"Oh, what a mighty Oak!" cried he:
"Had I not seen it as it lies,
I'd not have thought it half the size."

When some great man of noble mind,
Is struck by death, we often find
His worth more highly far extoll'd
Than when he stood above the mould.

XXII.

The Boy and the Butterfly.

Here and there about a valley
  Gaily flits a Butterfly,—
Lingering now with flowers to dally,
  Swiftly soaring now on high.

Eagerly a Boy pursues it
  Through its wayward, mazy flight,
Till upon a leaf he views it,
  Wearied out at last, alight.

Up he creeps, with cheeks all glowing,
  Bated breath, and glistening eyes,
Close behind it; and then throwing
  Out his hand, secures the prize.

Now, exulting o'er his capture,
  Tightly grasp'd he bears his prey,—
Calls to view it, in his rapture,
  All his fellows from their play.

Hear him loftily dilating
  On its beauty, as they stand
All attention round him, waiting
  Till he shall unclose his hand.

But, impatient while he lingers,
"Let us see!" they loudly cry,
Till he slowly lifts his fingers,
To display the Butterfly.

How he grieves, and stares astounded,
When he finds that nought remains
But a dying grub, surrounded
By a few dark, dusty grains!

Pleasure-seekers, thus grief-smitten
Ye must mourn on earth beneath
Joys, like Dead Sea apples bitten,
Leaving ashes in the teeth.

XXIII.

The Farmer and his Watch-dog.

WHILE fast asleep a Farmer lay
One gloomy night, and snored away,
A Thief was sneaking round the house,
And treading softly as a mouse.
The Watch-dog spied him through the dark,
And challenged him with angry bark:

The Farmer woke, jump'd out of bed,
And through the lattice thrust his head ;
But seeing nothing wrong around,
And hearing no suspicious sound,
He bade the Dog be still, and then
Went off to bed and and sleep again.
The Thief had hidden in a shed
At first, in great alarm and dread ;
But hearing that the Dog was chain'd,
And finding that he now refrain'd
From barking, with his purposed deed
He yet determined to proceed :
So when he thought the Farmer slept,
To the house-door he softly crept,
And there drew out his ample stock
Of burglars' keys to pick the lock.
The Watch-dog, as he saw the man,
In spite of orders now began
To bark again with all his force,
Until his efforts made him hoarse.
The Farmer, startled from his sleep,
Got up to take a second peep ;
But seeing nothing, as before,
Resolved to stop the loud uproar.
"Down, Tearem ! down, sir ! down," he cried ;
"I wish thy noisy jaws war tied.
Thee mun be gawing daft, I think,
Not letting people sleep a wink !"
And when this elegant address,
Obtain'd the much-desired success,

The speaker sought his couch once more —
And left the Robber at the door.

* * * * * *

Next morning, when from sound repose
Our Agriculturist arose,
He found the house-door on the latch,
And lying near a half-burnt match.
He sought the parlour, full of doubt,
And found the room turned wrong side out :
The drawers were lying all around,
Their contents scatter'd on the ground ;
And after searching every nook,
He miss'd his bulky pocket-book,
And with it, to his bitter sorrow,
His quarter's rent, due on the morrow.

Learn caution from the Farmer's loss :
At friendly warning don't be cross ;
Nor think, because you cannot see
A danger, that it cannot be ;
Or that by stopping the alarm
You must protect yourself from harm ;
Though harsh rebuffs, indeed, may end
In silencing the warmest friend.
Be certain, too, you'll seldom find
A monitor so true and kind
As that poor brute, for rarely men,
When once repulsed, will bark again.

XXIV.

The Astrologer.

I REMEMBER somewhere reading,
An Astrologer of old,
Through the fields at night proceeding,
Sought the future to unfold.

While upon the stars he ponder'd,
Gazing up with look intent,
From the pathway far he wander'd,
Quite unconscious where he went.

Soon arriving at a river,
Plump he fell into the stream,
Staring round him, with a shiver,
As if waking from a dream.

One who saw him from a distance
Quickly to the rescue ran;
Just in time to save existence,
Out he drew the drowning man,—

Saying: "Men have told me, stranger,
You can read the starry skies;
Yet you could not see the danger
Here, beneath your very eyes."

XXV.

The Hunter and his Hound.

A certain Hunter had a Hound,
Of noble breed, and much renown'd
For chasing boars, and many a wound
Received in fight his courage told.
But as with time the Dog grew old,
Though not less willing or less bold,
His speed and strength declined apace,
Till even if, gaining in the chase,
He brought the quarry face to face,
His feeble jaws strived to retain
Their hold upon the ear in vain.
On this his master would complain,
And chide him well for letting go,
Until the Hound replied: "You know,
'Tis lack of strength, not will, I show.
If what I am to censure lays
Me open thus, 'twere meet to praise
What I have been in former days.

Thus often men of noble mind,
When worn by age, detractors find,
To all their former merit blind.

XXVI.

The Crow and the Raven.

A Crow had found an oyster,
  Left stranded by the tide,
Which long in vain to open
  With beak and claws she tried.

"Friend," said a Raven, passing,
  "What do you there, I pray?"—
"This shell," she said, "I'd open,
  But can't find out the way."

"Oh, that," replied the Raven,
  "Is easy to effect."
Said Mrs. Crow: "My labour
  Would you, kind sir, direct?"

"With all my heart," he answer'd,
  "You see this flatten'd rock;
Fly up and drop it here, then,—
  You'll loose it by the shock."

The silly Crow flew upward,
  And dropp'd the oyster there;
The Raven hurried forward,
  And seized upon the fare.

'Tis well, when people proffer
Advice so pleasantly,
To ponder what advantage
They for themselves foresee.

XXVII.

The Cur and the Mastiff.

A Cur, while riding through the street
Upon a waggon, chanced to meet
A noble Mastiff in his course,
At whom he bark'd with all his force,
And scoff'd and jeer'd in doggish talk
At him who was compell'd to walk.
The Mastiff said: "Degenerate hound,
I'd teach thee, wert thou on the ground,
To sing another song; but now
The place defies me, and not thou." *

* This fable was suggested by an actual occurrence, and written without reference to Æsop's "Kid and Wolf;" but I afterwards found that I had unconsciously embodied a reminiscence of his fable—Οὐ σύ με λοιδορεῖς, ἀλλ' ὁ τόπος.

XXVIII.

The Fly and the Ant.

A Fly and Ant were in debate,
Which held the higher rank and state.
The Fly exclaim'd: "How can you dare
Your vile, ignoble lot compare
A single moment unto mine,
Who live a life almost divine.
With gods and goddesses I feast
On victims offer'd by the priest;
I tread on altars, and reside
In temples with the deified;
About a monarch's head I skip,
Or kiss his spouse's tempting lip;
I never stoop to humble toil,
But, like a warrior on his spoil,
I live in richest luxury:
Say, rustic, canst thou equal me?"—
"The privilege," replied the Ant,
"Of dining with the gods, I grant,
Is great to an invited guest,
But not to one they deem a pest.
Thou talkest of thy kings and queens;
'Tis but thy littleness that screens
Thee from their vengeance. Thou mayst vaunt
That temples are thy frequent haunt;

Yet ignominiously thou'rt driven
From every cottage under heaven.
Then, as to labour, to thy cost
Thou'lt learn its value in the frost.
Poor wretch, thou boastest in thy pride
Of what 'twere better far to hide.
Thou wastest all the sunny days,
And when the summer bloom decays,
And winter snows begin to fall,
I see thee starving on a wall;
While I, in ease and competence,
Enjoy the fruit of diligence."

Of their acquaintance men may boast,
Of dining with a lordly host,
Of paying countesses a call,
Or dancing with them at a ball;
When, like the Fly, they but intrude
On folks who think them very rude,
And, did they speak their minds, would say
They wish'd them far enough away.
We should not judge of any one
By where he's been, but what he's done.
Again, a gambling rake on town,
While fortune favours, may look down
On honest industry, and thank
The gods he moves in higher rank;
But in the winter of his days
A grievous penalty he pays.

XXIX.

The Wolf and the Shepherds.

A Wolf fell ill in olden times,
And in a cavern lay lamenting
The number of his grievous crimes,
And seem'd with all his heart repenting.

Now, after many days of pain,
The invalid recover'd slowly;
And when again he sought the plain,
His character seem'd alter'd wholly.

He'd grown so very mild and good,
That now, though it appear amazing,
He would not kill a sheep for food,
And vow'd he'd rather take to grazing.

But seeing, as he chanced to creep
Behind a quickset hedge, half-starving,
Two Shepherds by a slaughter'd sheep,
A leg of which they then were carving,—

"Oh, oh!" cried he, "these very men
Pretend to think me such a sinner
Because I live on mutton, when
They take the same themselves for dinner.

"Why should I try to live on grass?
If sheep must anyhow be eaten,
In eating them I were an ass
By their own guardians to be beaten."

In vain with censure and with threat
Of punishment, however ample,
They visit an offence who set
Of the offence itself example."

XXX.

The Two Bald Men.

Two bald old scavengers, who saw a bit
Of ivory gleaming in the dust they swept,
Each strove at the same time to seize on it,
But neither could the other intercept.
In fact, their bald pates meeting with a bump,
They fell to fighting for the half-hid prize;
And while exchanging many a heavy thump,
One got a broken nose, one two black eyes.
This conquer'd, but he lost the only tuft
Of hair still left on his corporeal dome;
And when he clutch'd the prize for which they'd cuff'd,
Oh, mockery! it was a *small-tooth'd comb!*

XXXI.

The Ass and the Flute.

A Donkey, dull, but just as vain,
Was cropping thistles on a plain;
And as he stroll'd upon his way,
By chance beheld a shepherd play
Upon a flute, whose dulcet strains
Attracted all his fellow-swains,
Who gather'd in a group to hear
The melody, from far and near.

"What fools are these!" the Donkey cried,
"Who stand with mouths all gaping wide,
And listen like a crowd of boys,
To hear that ninny make a noise
By blowing in a little hole.
To me it seems extremely droll,
That anybody should enjoy
The sound of such a stupid toy;
While for my part—but there, enough!
My mind is made of better stuff."

This said, the Ass, in scornful mood,
Went off again to munch his food.
Now, as he stray'd about, he found
A Shepherd's flute upon the ground,
Forgotten by some amorous Swain
Who fed his flocks upon the plain.

The Donkey started in surprise,
And scann'd the flute with curious eyes
And ears erect; then, half in dread,
Approaching slowly, bent his head,
And sniff'd about the instrument,
Till, by some wondrous accident,
A soft, melodious note arose
Beneath his awkward snuffling nose;
When, braying out with all his might,
And jumping round in high delight,
"Oh, what sweet music!" cried the brute:
"I too can play upon the flute!"

Thus human asses not a few
Deride an act they cannot do;
But when by hazard they succeed
In badly mimicking the deed,
Begin to bray about their parts,
As they were skill'd in all the arts.

XXXII.

The Butterfly and the Bee.

A MANY-COLOUR'D Butterfly,
About a garden gaily flitting,
Amid his rambles chanced to spy
A Bee upon a blossom sitting.

He wish'd her courteously "good day,"
And she responded as politely;
Then he pursued his errant way,
And o'er the flowers tripp'd lightly,—

Till, ere the Bee had moved away,
He made the circuit of the garden.
Surprised that she so long should stay,
"Madam," he said, "I beg your pardon,—

"But, as a fellow-tourist, I
Perhaps may venture to remind you,
That here are flowers of rarer dye
Than that on which again I find you.

"Believe me, there are hundreds more
Would well repay examination;
For I have roam'd the garden o'er
Since we exchanged our salutation.

"At flowers of varied shape and hue
A passing peep meanwhile I've taken,
And feel surprised indeed that you
This simple one have not forsaken."—

"Well, sir," replied the busy Bee,
"The sight of these may be alluring;
But sight alone is not enough for me,—
I seek for something more enduring.

"If I should flit from flower to flower
In summer time, when days are sunny,
I should be left in wintry hour
To perish for the lack of honey.

"And though this flower may seem so plain
That you are tempted to despise it,
To me it yields such solid gain
That more than gayer ones I prize it."

How many like this Butterfly
Behave in travelling and reading:
They feast the fancy or the eye,
The judgment never think of feeding.

From place to place, or book to book,
They pass for pleasure, not from duty;
And solid profit overlook,
While seeking interest or beauty.

Though we may well divert the mind
With lovely sights and charming pages,
Our true instruction we shall find
In things of worth and works of sages.

But see or read whate'er we may,
This maxim constantly should guide us:
Hard study is the only way
To gain by mental food supplied us.

XXXIII.

The Frogs and the Sun.

It was a monarch's wedding day,
And all the town was glad and gay;
But Æsop, as he stroll'd about,
And heard the crowds of people shout,
Said, "Surely men are not so wise
As animals that they despise."—
"And why?" ask'd some one by his side.
"One summer-time," the Sage replied,
"A rumour in the marshes spread,
That Sol intended soon to wed.
On this the Frogs met in a crowd,
And utter'd murmurings so loud,
That Jove, who heard them, wish'd to know
Whatever could disturb them so.
'We hear it said,' the Frogs replied,
'That Sol intends to take a bride:
But if alone his burning heat
Has so exhausted our retreat,
That all the pools are nearly dry,
And we of thirst begin to die,
How terrible our fate will be
If he should have a family!'"

XXXIV.

The Stag and his Son.

"My father knew the time," began
An old Stag, talking with his son,—
"My father knew the time when man
Had not yet made the thundering gun."

"Ah! in his days," the son replied,
"Our folk enjoyed a happy fate!"—
"Nay!" said the grave sire, "you decide
Too readily upon their state.

"Those days were different, I own,
But yet no better for our race;
For ere the deadly gun was known,
Men had the long-bow in its place.

"In youth I've seen the power of each;
And though the bow gave little sound,
And had not quite so wide a reach,
Its arrow made an ugly wound."

Ye simple folk, who think your kind
So highly blest in days of old,
In history's page ye'll hardly find
The traces of your age of gold.

XXXV.

The Ass in the Lion's Skin.

An Eastern peasant had an Ass,
Which, being rather short of grass,
He used to send at night to feed
By stealth upon a neighbour's mead.
One night the animal was found,
And straightway driven from the ground.
The man then got a lion's skin
To dress his hungry Donkey in,
And sent him thieving thus disguised:
But charged him, as his life he prized,
To hold his peace; for if he bray'd,
His kind would be at once betray'd.
So ev'ry night, thus nobly clad,
His fill of grass the Donkey had;
For any who by chance espied
The fellow in his borrow'd hide,
Believing him a lion, fled
Instanter from his presence dread.
The farmer, meeting him one night,
Ran off, and climb'd a tree in fright!
But while among the boughs he lay,
Another donkey chanced to bray;
On hearing which the peasant's brute
Must, like a donkey, follow suit.

The farmer heard the tell-tale sound,
And scrambling quickly to the ground,
Ran to the beast with stick in hand,
And beat him roughly off the land.

Scarce need the moral be express'd:
That silence for an Ass is best.

XXXVI.

The Swan and the Goose.

Gently floating with the breeze,
Type of dignity and ease,
On a lake a Swan was swimming,
Leisurely her feathers trimming.
Here and there about the pool
Swam a Goose—proverbial fool.
On the bank a rustic stood,
Gazing in admiring mood.
"Sir," said Goose "why stare you so?
I'm a Swan I'd have you know!"
Fitting answer to such pride,
With a laugh the clown replied.

Geese abound in every place,
Ever a presumptuous race.

XXXVII.

The Rose and the Peony.

"Rose," began the Peony,
"Men are all demented, truly;
Though they think so light of me,
Ever praising you unduly.

"Like the glowing blush of morn
Spreads my noble crimson blossom,
And I bear no vengeful thorn,
Traitor-like, upon my bosom.

"Men can find none great as I
Through the radiant garden-bowers,—
None of finer form or dye;
Yet they call thee Queen of Flowers,

"What is there to blame in me?
Tell me frankly what thou thinkest."—
"Grand and beauteous thou mayst be,"
Said the Rose; "but yet—thou stinkest!"*

Should a lovely form and face
Praise and admiration merit,
When we cannot fail to trace
Taint of evil on the spirit?

---

* Daß du so prahlst, und doch nur stinkst.

XXXVIII.

The Wolf's Mourning.

In Switzerland, where Wolves reside,
A numerous flock of sheep had died
Of some dire pest within a week.
A Wolf, who'd heard his fellows speak
Of this mischance, resolved to go
And learn if it were really so.
He reach'd the plain, and meeting there
The Sheep-dog, ask'd, with friendly air,
If this were true about the sheep;
Which learning, he began to weep
And whine: "O dear, those fine fat lambs,
Their noble sires, and comely dams!
Oh, I assure you, I could shed
My blood in tears to know them dead!
How can your master bear the shock
Of losing such a lovely flock?
It must be sad—I pity him."
The Dog replied: "Sir Isegrim,
To see you mourning in this fashion,
I'd give you credit for compassion,
Did I not know the interest
Which wakes this pity in your breast."

Thus men another's loss will rue—
When thus the loss affects them too.

XXXIX.

The Fox that lost his Tail.

A certain Fox, who long had laugh'd
At huntsman, hound, and trap,
One night, in spite of all his craft,
Met with a sad mishap.

A trap at length, with sudden bite,
Had caught him by the tail:
He pull'd and tugg'd with all his might,
But found it no avail;—

The teeth had got too tight a grip,
It could not be withdrawn;
The spring was fix'd too fast to slip,
And held the Fox till dawn.

Soon as he saw the sun appear,
With fear and fury blind,
He jump'd and jerk'd till he was clear—
But left his tail behind.

Now overwhelm'd with shame and grief,
Avoiding all his tribe,
He sought in solitude relief
From scorn and scoff and gibe.

At last too great a bore he found
  This life of loneliness;
So called his fellow-foxes round,
  And made them this address:—

"My friends, I fain would see the mode
  Among our folk prevail
Of cutting off the useless load
  We designate a tail.

"I call it useless but 'tis worse—
  'Tis dangerous to boot;
In flight it much impedes our course,
  With foes in hot pursuit.

"If through a hole or hedge we creep,
  It stops us on the way:
We struggle, break our victims' sleep,
  And lose them by delay.

"'Tis for the brush, or tail, you know,
  The cruel huntsman strives;
By cutting off this source of woe
  Would many save their lives.

"And then, in spite of all our care,
  The tail is apt to catch
In some unnoticed trap or snare,
  When life hangs on despatch.

"Such the misfortune I have met —
If I may call it so,
When thus I lost without regret
What I can well forego.

"Then, as to looks, the tail to me
Seems quite devoid of grace,
Unsightly as a thing can be,
And wholly out of place."

Thus spake the Fox: to him replied
A comrade in the throng:
"My friend, it cannot be denied,
Your arguments are strong;—

"But ere we yield to what you say,
Turn round, and let us see
If you without a tail display
A better shape than we."

He turn'd about: there rose a shout
Of scornful laughter then,
That quickly put our Fox to rout,
To live alone again.

To point the moral of this *tail*
Two lines may well suffice:
The vicious would on all prevail
To imitate their vice.

XL.

The Butterfly and the Silkworm.

"Butterfly," the Silkworm said,
"Wherefore weep and droop your head?
Say, what cloud of sorrow now
Lours upon that once bright brow?"—
"Know you," said the Butterfly,
"How the roving Bee and I
Sported o'er the meadows gay,
Sipping nectar all the way?
Oh, such loving friends were we!
But she's gone away from me,
Bearing honey to her hive,
And her loss I can't survive."—
"Nay," replied the Silkworm, "you
Ought to learn to labour too;
For how sweet when work is done
'Tis to gambol in the sun.
Soon the Bee will come again;
Greater her enjoyment then:
After toil one can enjoy
Pleasure's cup without alloy."

XLI.

The Lamb and the Wolf.

One morning to a streamlet's brink
A little Lamb had come to drink ;
And as the pretty innocent
Assuaged his thirst, with head down-bent,
Some distance up the stream there stood
A savage Wolf, intent on blood ;
Who, as he saw the Lamb below,
Cried out : "How dare you serve me so?
A scion of your sordid tribe
To sully water I imbibe!"—
"Nay," said the Lamb, "how can that be?
The water flows from you to me."—
"That," growl'd the Wolf, "is poor excuse ;
But none I'll take for the abuse
You spake of me, as I am told,
Six months ago in yonder fold."
The Lambkin answer'd : "You should know,
I was not born *three* months ago."—
"It matters not," replied the other ;
"If not yourself, it was your brother."—
"But," pled the Lamb, with accent mild,
"I am my parents' only child."—
"Well, then, it was your dam or sire,"
At once return'd the ready liar ;

And for the insults of your race,
That I have borne so long a space
And for your present insolence,
I swear you go not living hence!"
With that, upon the Lamb he sprang,
And strangled him with ruthless fang.

'Tis vain to argue with the strong,
When they resolve to do you wrong;
For in default of true offence,
They never lack a false pretence.

XLII.

The Goose and the Boar.

A Goose, encountering a savage Hog
While sharpening his tusks against a log,
Inquired the reason of his doing so,
When, as it seem'd, unchallenged by a foe.
The Boar replied: "A prudent beast prepares
For challenge, lest it take him unawares:
I should have little opportunity
For whetting teeth before an enemy."

The Boar's precaution, reader, imitate:
In prosperous days prepare for adverse fate.

XLIII.

The Ivy and the Bramble.

"Oh, how I pity thee, poor neighbour!" said
The Ivy to a Bramble growing near;
"Thou dar'st not lift thy feeble head,
But crawlest on the ground in fear.

"Why not endeavour to ascend like me,
Whose lofty head is towering in the air?
I twine around this noble tree,
And in his exaltation share."

The Bramble said: "I grant thou climbest high;
But while my native strength upholdeth me,
A humbler crawler e'en than I
Wouldst thou, if unsupported, be."

Translators, commentators, editors,
Who cling about an author as your tree,
To such as you the tale refers—
And let it teach you modesty.

XLIV.

The Fly in the Cathedral.

A Fly, while walking on the dome
Of great St. Peter's Church at Rome,
Exclaim'd: "To me this lofty pile
Of stones seems built in wretched style:
I scarce find one smooth place o'er all
The surface of this crooked wall;
Go where I will, I still detect
Some excrescence or some defect."

A Spider, from his web o'erhead,
Had heard the critic speak, and said:
"'Tis not for you, poor puny flies,
To judge of things of such a size.
This structure was not raised for you,
But creatures in whose larger view
The workmanship, you censure so,
No sign of ruggedness may show;
While they see what you never can,
The beauty of the building's plan."

Thus often narrow-minded men
Will judge of things beyond their ken;
They spy slight faults that cannot mar,
But see not where high beauties are.

XLV.

The Step-ladder.

A Sparrow pounced upon a Fly,
Whom struggling to his nest he bore:
And vainly did the insect cry:
"Oh, spare me! spare me, I implore!"—
"No," said the murderer, "you must die;
For you are not so strong as I."

A Sparrow-hawk came flying past,
And seized the Sparrow on his way;
Who, as his captor held him fast,
Cried: "Spare me! let me go I pray!"—
"No," said the murderer, "you must die;
For you are not so strong as I."

An Eagle darted through the air,
And clutch'd the Hawk with sudden grasp;
When "Spare me, sire! I pray thee spare!"
The stricken bird began to gasp.
"No," said the murderer, "you must die;
For you are not so strong as I."

A Hunter bent his deadly bow,
And smote the Eagle as he spoke;

Who cried: "O wretch, to slay me so!
How have I merited this stroke?"—
"Yet," said the murderer, "you must die;
For you are not so strong as I."

XLVI.

The Wolf and the Hedgehog.

One day a Wolf and Hedgehog met:
"Friend," said the former, "I regret
To see you wear in time of peace
So needlessly that prickly fleece.
Now, why not put your mail away?
You might resume it any day,
If war should happen to break out."—
"Nay," said the Hedgehog, "ne'er without
My coat of armour would I stray.
It is a time of peace, you say;
But tell me, sir, would that be true
If now unarm'd I spoke to you?"

Such wolves are common in all lands;
Hence e'er on guard the wise man stands.

XLVII.

The Monkey and the Dogs.

A WEALTHY merchant, who some time
Had sojourn'd in an eastern clime,
Upon returning home had brought
With him a little Monkey, caught
When very young, and now as tame
As monkey ever yet became.
This creature, as in years he grew,
Increased in craft and mischief too,
And seem'd so clever, so astute,
That many thought the nimble brute
An imp in quadrumanal shape
Who'd made a fortunate escape,
By some deep stratagem, from—well,
From where it would be rude to tell.
And, truly, many of his tricks
Befitted well a son of Nick's.

But whether monkey, imp, or what
He really was, here matters not.
Suffice it, he inhabited
A large old country house, and led
A life by far more free from care
Than he allow'd to others there.

One morning, in the kitchen-yard,
A Mastiff who had been on guard

Throughout the night, upon a heap
Of straw was lying fast asleep.
A Spaniel, too, of slender make,
Lay in the yard, but wide awake :
He slept by night, and only lay
Reclining in a lazy way,
For want of something else to do.

Meanwhile, the Monkey, looking through
A window, spied the pair of dogs,
And leaping on a pile of logs,
With agile spring and nimble bound
Had soon attain'd the level ground.
To meet him there the Spaniel ran,
And soon a game of romps began.
First came a wrestle, then a race
With bark and chatter round the place ;
When Jacko, to escape attack,
Jump'd lightly up on Toby's back,
And, like a man on horse astride,
About the courtyard took a ride ;
Then springing down, made off on foot,
His pony starting in pursuit.

But when they'd managed to beguile
Some twenty minutes in this style,
The little Spaniel, panting fast,
Retired to gather breath at last,
And squatted on the Watch-dog's lair,
And then the Monkey followed there.

Now, Master Jacko, as he saw

The Mastiff sleeping in the straw,
The love of mischief conquering fear,
Pull'd smartly at the sleeper's ear,
Who gave a drowsy growl, and drew
His head away an inch or two.
Bold with impunity, the knave
Approach'd a second time, and gave
The other ear a sharper tug;
On which there came an angry shrug
And somewhat louder growl, and then
The dog began to snore again.

The Monkey, still not satisfied,
A new annoyance shortly tried;
For catching up a bit of straw,
And slily stretching out his paw
Above the sleeper, he began
(A trick, no doubt, he'd learnt from man)
To titillate his victim's nose.

The Mastiff started from repose,
And seeing not the teasing spright
Dart up the wood-pile out of sight,
But only Toby standing near,
Aghast and shivering with fear,
He sprang upon him in a breath,
And nearly shook the wretch to death.

Meanwhile, among the logs of wood
In hiding lay the ne'er-do-good,
And grinn'd and chuckled in high glee
At what he thought a first-rate spree.

——

Now, little folks as well as great,
Take warning from the Spaniel's fate :
Avoid consorting with a knave ;
For though *you* may not misbehave,
You'll surely smart for some offence
Of his, despite your innocence.

XLVIII.

The Piece of Clay.

A FRIEND, while at the bath one day,
Gave me a piece of scented clay.*
"Amber or musk art thou," I said,
"Such ravishing perfume to shed?"
It answer'd : "I was common clay,
Till with the rose I made some stay ;
Thus I partook its precious worth,
Or I were still but common earth."

From good companions we may learn
To practise goodness in our turn.

* A kind of unctuous clay, گل خوشبوي *gil-i-khoshbuy*, used in Persia in place of soap, and perfumed with essence of roses.

XLIX.

The Butterfly on the Rose.

Upon a rose a Butterfly
Of gold and purple hue
Was sitting, boasting haughtily:
"For me this flower grew!"

Then o'er its crimson leaves awhile
She flutter'd in her glee,
Repeating vainly, with a smile:
"This flower grew for me!"

While on her throne the would-be queen
Was boasting in this wise,
A little Boy approach'd unseen,
To gain so rare a prize.

His stealthy hand, with sudden grasp,
He threw around his prey,
And, with her dying in his clasp,
Bore too the flower away.

Amid thine hours of pride and joy
Forget not life hath foes:
Think of the Butterfly the Boy
Caught boasting on the rose.

L.

Winter and Spring.

It was the Spring, the fairy time of flowers,
Of singing-birds, and gladsome loving hours;
Earth bloom'd 'neath life-infusing sunny rays,
And every creature sang a hymn of praise;
When from the north the frost-wind sudden sped,
Laying the primrose low, the swallow dead;
And white-wing'd Winter soar'd again on high,
His snowy pinions sweeping through the sky.

"Old man," said Spring, "thy reign was past and gone:
Why thus usurp an abdicated throne,
And o'er the earth thy leaden sceptre rear?
Wherefore a heedless war with me declare,
Driving the seasons from their wonted course?"

Said Winter then, in accents stern and hoarse:
"Oft, brother, is thy breath untimely felt,
Causing my ice and snow too soon to melt;
Oft are thy flowrets nourish'd by the rays
Of pallid sunshine that illume my days;
And while I reign, I hear abroad thy song:
How, then, canst thou accuse me of a wrong?"

So, when misfortune furrows youthful brows,
And grief the spirit prematurely bows,
Is there not consolation in the truth,
That age may sometimes feel the joys of youth?

LI.

The Dog and the Sheep.

A Dog and Sheep, fast friends of old,
Were talking in their owner's fold.
"Alas!" exclaim'd the Dog, "how great
The misery of our hapless fate!
How often have I felt or view'd
Ungenerous man's ingratitude!
You, without murmur, yearly give,
Your wool to clothe him while you live,
Resign your milk at his demand,
And richly fertilize his land;
Yet, in return, his ruthless knife
Will some day surely seek your life,
When first of offspring, kindred, friends,
Perchance, you've mourn'd the cruel ends.
He talks of wolves and all their crimes—
His own are worse a thousand times!
For me, submissive, tender, brave,
I serve him as a faithful slave;
But all the recompense I know,
A niggard crust, harsh word, or blow;
And when with age my strength decays,
The pond or rope will end my days.
Alas! how wretched is our lot,
To live for one who loves us not!"—

"True," said the patient Sheep; "but then
I hardly think these savage men,
The authors of our misery,
Can lead a happier life than we,
Who have, despite our sad career,
What they have not, a conscience clear;
And this one thought consoles me still,
'Tis better suffer than do ill."

LII.

The Cat and the Cheese.

A poor old man—whose usual fare
Was bread and cheese, with none to spare—
Was plagued with mice, who came in scores
To feed upon his frugal stores.
He got a cat, not overfed,
And shut her, when he went to bed,
Inside his cupboard; where, 'tis true,
She killed a daring mouse or two;
But then, impatient to appease
Her hunger, ate up all the cheese.

Thus men, through rash attempts at cure,
May make worse ills than they endure.

LIII.

The Bee and the Wasp.

"Good morning, cousin; hope I see
You well to-day,"
Exclaim'd a Wasp, who met a Bee
Upon her way.

"Cousin, indeed!" the other cried:
"Pray how are we
Related that I hear applied
Such term to me?"—

"Related," said the Wasp, "I claim
Affinity
Of kind and form, if not of name
And family."—

"Well, as to form," was the reply,
"It may be true,
A sort of faint resemblance I
May bear to you:

"But in our habits, I am sure,
We differ much.
You live on fruit that grows impure
Beneath your touch;

"I live on flowers, but leave their bloom
Still fresh and fair,
That not the less they still perfume
The summer air:

"You labour for yourself alone,
While I prepare
My sweets not only for my own,
But others' fare."

The Wasp replied: "That may be so;
But still one thing
Connects us closely, for you know
Each has a sting."—

"Yes," said the Bee, "but you abuse
Yours for offence,
While I am careful but to use
Mine for defence."

How many waspish people try
To pass for bees,
Because in some things to the eye
Their form agrees.

But though the taint or sting is met
Where'er they roam,
You never knew them forming yet
A honeycomb.

LIV.

The Criminal Dog.

"WHAT think you of this sad news, brother?"
Said one Sheep as he met another,
"What?" said his friend, "I've heard of none."—
"Why, what that wicked Spring has done,—
The dog that all about the place
Esteem'd the model of his race.
He ate a pretty little lamb,
And when he'd done it, slew her dam;
And then attack'd the Shepherd too!"—
"Nay," said the other, "is this true?"—
"Quite true; I've heard it much discuss'd."—
"Good Heavens! in whom, then, can one trust!"
Thus sped the news on rumour's wing,
And such the triple crime of Spring.
Seized in the fact, he now lay bound;
And while his fellow-dogs stood round,
To take a warning from his fate,
A group of shepherds gravely sate
In judgment, till each black offence
Was proved by clearest evidence.
Spring hung his head throughout the trial;
Made no defence, and no denial.
The sentence came—but moved him not—
To hang the wretch upon the spot.

The rope was brought; the shepherds now
Began to tie it round a bough.
Meanwhile, Spring sadly raised his head,
And, turning to his fellows, said:
"Ye, that no longer I dare call
My friends, as once—oh, listen all!
Learn from my miserable end
What consequences may attend
One guilty impulse uncontroll'd.
"For fifteen years in field and fold
I did my duty as I should,
Until this morn by yonder wood.
There as I lay upon the ground,
A wolf leapt forth with sudden bound,
Snatch'd up a lamb, and darted back
I follow'd on the robber's track;
He tore his booty as he fled,
And drank its life-blood as it bled;
Then dropp'd his prize and stood at bay;
We fought—I slew him in the fray.
"'Twas well, so far; but now, alas!
I saw the dead lamb on the grass,
And urged by lawless appetite,
Perceiving nobody in sight,
I wish'd—I long'd—I dared to eat;—
When, lo! a sudden plaintive bleat!
The ewe had come to seek her child;
And I, with shame and terror wild,—

I sprang upon her, fearing she
Might charge her infant's death on me;
And thus I slew her, turn'd to fly,
And met the advancing Shepherd's eye.
He saw the corse—my reek jaws,
And raised his staff;—I could not pause—
For me no pardon now, I knew—
And at his throat I madly flew.
He laid me senseless with a blow,
And bound me—all the rest you know.
"Now tried, convicted, doom'd to death,
Oh! listen to my latest breath;
See how from crime to crime I went
And merited this punishment;
Learn how a slight offence may lead
To dark, unpardonable deed;
And tread not near the precipice,
If you would shun the dread abyss."

LV.

The Cuckoo.

A STARLING, in a cage confined,
Contrived one morning to get free;
And leaving dusty streets behind,
Flew back to verdant wood and lea.

He met a Cuckoo in a glen,
Who, having heard the Starling's tale,
Said: "Of us singers what say men?
How speak they of the Nightingale?"

"I found," replied the Starling, "all
Enthusiastic in his praise;
The whole town says, that, great or small,
No bird can equal his sweet lays."

"The Lark—has he obtain'd renown?"—
"Yes, he is much admired by men."—
"And is the Thrush approved in town?"—
"The people praise him now and then."

"And of myself what might they say?"—
"I never heard you named, I own."—
"Then, since men slight me, I will aye
Keep talking of myself alone."

With this resolve, away he flew
To trumpet forth his would-be fame,
And of the song that erst he knew
Soon recollected but his name.

In human shape we may detect
Unfeather'd cuckoos, who, to be
Revenged on other men's neglect,
Prate of themselves incessantly.

LVI.

The Two Mules and the Robbers.

Two Mules were travelling of old,
Both laden — one with bags of gold ;
The other carried sacks of grain.
The former, of his burden vain,
Pranced onward with a haughty tread,
And rang his bell with tossing head,
The other follow'd more sedate,
With downcast head and modest gait.
Thus as they journey'd on their way,
Three robbers, who in ambush lay
Within a neighbouring wood, leapt out,
With aspect fierce and threatening shout,
And in a short unequal fight
Put both the muleteers to flight ;
Then bore the money-bags away,
Leaving the Mule, slash'd in the fray,
His miserable plight to mourn.
Then he that carried sacks of corn,
Still safe remaining with his load,
Said : "Truly, the contempt they show'd
For me, I count as so much gain,
Since nought I lose, nor suffer pain.

The poor man travelleth exempt
From outrage, which the rich must tempt.

LVII.

The Crane and the Trout.

A Crane, who, in her usual way,
Was fishing in a stream one day,
Had seized upon a little Trout,
Who straight began to whimper out:
"Oh, let me free,—I am too small
To do you any good at all!
Let me but live a month, and then
You'll have me quite as big again.
Meanwhile, you cannot fail to find
Here plenty greater of my kind.
Release me, and I'll show you where
You'll get sufficient and to spare."—
"Not I, indeed," replied the Crane;
"So you implore and weep in vain.
You say a month, but in a day
You may be far enough away.
Then, as for what you talk about
Your larger friends,—know, silly Trout,
That one fish in my bill I deem,
Worth half a dozen in the stream."

Some men, who lack the fisher's wit,
Will hazard certain benefit
To seek a greater doubtful one,
And finish by possessing none.

LVIII.

The Wind and the Sun.

One day in March, when Wind and Sun,
Were struggling for the upper hand,
And Spring already had begun
To scatter flowers about the land,—

A traveller, in mantle dight,
Was trudging o'er a wooded plain;
And, spite of cold, his heart was light
To hear the singing-birds again.

And presently grew gayer still,
When, as he journey'd, by degrees
The Wind became less rude and chill,
And sank into a pleasant breeze.

But Boreas was not yet subdued,
He was but taking breath awhile,
And laugh'd in mockery as he view'd
The wanderer's gladsome gait and smile.

"Oh, oh!" cried he, "this man at length
No longer fears my fierce attack;
But soon I'll let him feel my strength,
And blow the mantle off his back."—

"Nay," said the Sun, "on that, I know,
"You'll vainly spend your roughest blast;
For savagely as you may blow,
You'll find it firmer on at last."

The blusterer answer'd: "You shall see!
But I will bet you, for the joke,
In equal contest I shall be
The first to ease him of his cloak.

"I'll try my strength for half an hour,
And if I've not succeeded then,
I'll leave you free to show your pow'r:
If neither wins, we'll try again."

The Sun agreed; the Wind began
The tournament with such a gust,
He nearly overturn'd the man,
And fill'd his eyes with blinding dust.

Again he raged: the forest bent;
The birds all trembled in affright;
The valleys howl'd; the trees were rent;
The clouds of heaven fled the sight.

But all the fiercer that he blew,
And fretted, fumed, and lash'd the ground,
The shivering traveller only drew
His mantle all the closer round.

At length the Wind's half-hour expired,
And, wearied, humbled, mortified,
In sullen anger he retired,
While Sol came forth in all his pride.

All nature, gaining courage now,
Grew calm again, while everything
Look'd up to greet his smiling brow,
And every bird began to sing.

Rejoicing at the sudden change,
The traveller too held up his head;
And though he thought the weather strange,
Had soon resumed his lightsome tread.

And while he thus pursued his way,
And Sol kept shining on his form
With growing power and steady ray,
He felt himself becoming warm.

Ere twenty minutes now had past,
Succumbing to the potent charm,
The man took off his cloak at last,
And threw it loosely on his arm.

If ever you desire to bend
Another's conduct to your will,
Try kindness' genial ray, my friend,—
Not anger's gale severe and chill.

LIX.

The Dog and his Shadow.

A Dog, who from a butcher's shop
Had carried off a mutton-chop,
And heard the owner in pursuit,
Jump'd, to avoid his heavy boot,
Into a river running nigh,
Where man and boot he might defy.
But looking down when half-way through,
And happening in the stream to view
His shadow, to his greedy eyes
It seem'd another cur and prize.
He sprang upon it, to obtain
The booty, but he sprang in vain:
Not only did he gain no more,
But lost the meat he had before,
Which in his hurry letting go,
It vanish'd in the flood below.

Beware of shadows in life's stream,
However tempting they may seem:
By catching at them as they cross'd,
Their substance many men have lost.

LX.

The Fox, the Wolf, and the Horse.

A HUNGRY Fox, one night, while out
On pillage, having roam'd about
Some hours and yet obtain'd no prey,
Now met a Wolf upon his way,
To whom, their salutations o'er,
He said: "I trust you've met with more
Success than I can boast to-night;
For I've not even caught a sight
Of chicken, pullet, hen, or cock
Since yester-eve at nine o'clock"—
"Oh," said the Wolf, "two days have pass'd
Since I contrived to break my fast."—
"Then come with me," the Fox replied,
"And you may soon be satisfied.
In yonder field I saw a Horse;
And though the flesh is rather coarse,
And I'm not fond of eating hacks,
I shouldn't mind if we went snacks.
Alone I couldn't kill the beast,
Or I'd have tried a horse-flesh feast;
But now, I think, if we unite
Our forces, we may dare the fight."
The Wolf immediately agreed,
And off they trotted to the mead;

But as they near'd their destined prey,
Each fearing to commence the fray,
They went, as prudent warriors ought,
To reconnoitre ere they fought.
So Renard, readiest in discourse,
Began conversing with the Horse,
Said he: "Good evening, Master Steed.
You seem to come of noble breed:
How are you named may I inquire?"
The Horse replied: "They call me Squire."
Fox ask'd his age, and when he told,
Declared he thought him not so old:
And then he ask'd his owner's name.
The Horse made answer: "As I came
Into his hands but recently,
His name is not yet known to me;
But if you wish, I think that you
May see it stamp'd upon my shoe."
Said Renard, guessing his intent:
"Alas! my friend, I never went
To school, and cannot read a word,
My worthy sire could not afford
The outlay for my education,
As he was but of humble station,
And lived and died extremely poor;
But"—bowing to the Wolf—"I'm sure
My comrade, of scholastic fame,
Will in a moment read the name."
The flatter'd Wolf, as this was said,
Approach'd to read, and bent his head;

When, ere he could suspect the trick,
Squire clove his skull with mighty kick.

Imprimis, if you would not meet
With kicks, beware of horses' feet;
And, *item*, if another wishes you
Some act instead of him to do,
Consider first if he refrains
From lack of skill or fear of pains.

LXI.

The Tight-rope Dancer.

Practising the art of dancing
On the tight-rope, and advancing
In dexterity apace,
Skipp'd a youth before a party
In a circus, who with hearty
Plaudits often fill'd the place.

By their praises animated,
With success exhilarated,
He accomplish'd wonders now;
Held the balance-pole so neatly—
Turn'd and turn'd again as featly
As a bird upon a bough.

Up he leap'd so high and lightly,
Press'd upon the rope so slightly,
  Looking like an airy sprite.
You'd have thought, to see him tripping,
Of a nimble swallow dipping
  In the water on its flight.

But, with vanity elated,
He unwisely overrated
  His ability at last;
And the balance-pole, so needed,
Thinking that it but impeded,
  Rashly to the ground he cast.

Now he danced with step unstable,
Lost his balance on the cable,
  Slipp'd, and fell with all his weight.
Those about him ran in terror
To his aid, and found his error
  Punish'd by a broken pate.

Safely on the rope existence
Would you tread, for your assistance
  Reason's balance-pole employ;
For without it, insecurely
Stepping, you will surely
  Slip and fall, as did the boy.

LXII.

The Dogs and the Lions.

"In Western lands I grieve to find
So little spirit in my kind,"
A travell'd Spaniel one day said
To other dogs, who stood around;
"But in the East, where I was bred,
Some valiant dogs may yet be found—
Yes, dogs of noble race and mien,
Who fear no earthly creature's might,
And whom myself I've often seen
With savage Lions waging fight."—
"What, Toby! do you mean to say,"
Ask'd a grave Pointer in surprise,
"That dogs were ever known to slay
Wild beasts of such vast strength and size?"—
"Nay," said the Spaniel, "nay, my friend;
They could not slay their foes, indeed:
Yet think, how famous to contend
With animals of such a breed!"—
"Famous!" rejoined the other,—"no;
I think such dogs are not a bit
Superior to ourselves, but only show
In acting thus their want of wit;
For what advantage can they gain
In fighting only to be slain?"

This tale I beg to dedicate
To vulgar carpers at the great,
Who think to hang their own mean name
Upon the peg of others' fame.

LXIII.

The Dog in the Manger.

A Bulldog in a manger lay,
Reclining on a heap of hay.
An Ox approach'd to taste the food;
Up-sprang the Dog in savage mood,
And snarl'd and growl'd, and dared the Steer
With gnashing teeth to venture near.
The Bullock turn'd to leave the shed,
And, fired with indignation, said:
"Malicious wretch! who cannot eat
The hay you tread beneath your feet;
Yet, in your spite, will not permit
One who would eat to touch a bit."

How sad that men, who make pretence
To reason's light and moral sense,
Should imitate the Bulldog's greed,
By hoarding what they cannot need,
But which they churlishly refuse
To let a fellow-creature use.

LXIV.

The Crow and the Fox.

Upon an oak-tree sat a Crow,
And peck'd a pilfer'd piece of cheese:
A Fox was passing down below,
And gazing up among the trees.
He happen'd thus to see the bird;
And when the piece of cheese he spied,
A method to his mind occurr'd
To gain it, which at once he tried.
"Oh, what a lovely bird!" he said;
"What ebon plumage, thick and sleek!
How rare a form! how fine a head!
What pointed claws, and glossy beak!
Oh, with such beauty, what a voice
That paragon must surely own!
'Twould make my very heart rejoice
To listen to its charming tone."
He ceased; but still with steadfast gaze
Bent upward stood a little while,
As if in rapture and amaze.
The silly Crow believed the guile,
And fain would prove how sweet her note
(She might have thought it sweet, no doubt);
Her bill she open'd, and her throat
A grating croak or two gave out.

But 'mid her musical display
She dropp'd the lump of cheese, when, lo!
To her unspeakable dismay,
'Twas swallow'd by the Fox below.

We should not heed what flatterers say,
Unless their price we wish to pay.

LXV.

The Hawk and the Thrush.

A Hawk swoop'd down with sudden rush,
And seized a sweetly-singing Thrush:
"Oh," cried he, "since you sing so well,
In taste you surely must excel."

If in simplicity, or joke,
Or malice, the assassin spoke,
I know not; but the other day
I overheard a person say:
"This lady, who can sing so sweetly,
And charm her audience so completely,
How amïable she must be!"
And this was true simplicity.

LXVI.

The Old Lion and the Fox.

An aged Lion found his strength
Each day decreasing, till at length
He grew so feeble that his pace
Was quite unequal to the chase,
And so resolved to have recourse
To strategy in lieu of force.
He kept his bed, and lying still,
Pretended to be very ill,
And groan'd as he were dying when
An animal approach'd his den;
Who, entering to learn the cause,
Would fall before the Lion's jaws,
Till very soon within the cave
Some dozen victims found a grave.

A Fox, who happen'd to have heard
This matter hinted by a bird,
Was passing by the den one day,
And seeing Leo as he lay
(But wisely keeping out of reach),
Began a sham condoling speech:
He'd heard with grief his grace was ill,
But hoped 'twould not be long until
He would be on his legs again,
And well enough to leave his den.

"Alas!" replied the invalid,
"I fear it will be long indeed:
I feel so bad I cannot eat,
And shudder at the smell of meat;—
But won't you step inside a while?"—
"Nay," answer'd Renard, with a smile;
"For leading up to your retreat
I see the marks of many feet,
But none that point the other way;
And so, in spite of what you say,
And all your sighs and hollow moans,
When I behold yon pile of bones,
I hardly think that you have quite
So very bad an appetite."

A crafty person thus divines,
From doubtful hints and little signs,
A peril, where the treacherous wile
Entraps the man devoid of guile.

LXVII.

The Two Lizards and the Deer.

Two Lizards on an ancient wall
Were promenading in the sun.
"D'you know, companion," said the one,
"I like not this dull life at all—

If life, indeed, one ought to style
A state so void of liveliness.
It often fills me with distress
To think I am a thing so vile.
I wish I were a noble deer,—
Like that—see—who with nimble bound,
So gaily gallops o'er the ground,—
Instead of vegetating here."—
"Stay!" answered his associate;
"See yonder comes the yelping pack
Upon the flying creature's track:
You need not envy him his fate.
Look! there, they gain upon him now;
He turns, and fiercely stands at bay;
The stag-hounds hurry to the fray;
He flings one o'er his frowning brow,
And dyes his antlers with his gore;
But others come—with ruthless fang
Upon his neck they spring and hang,—
And now he falls to rise no more!"
The other Lizard, when he saw
The hapless Stag's untimely death,
Said: "Ne'er again I'll waste my breath
In cavilling at Nature's law;
For though I lead in my low state
A less adventurous career
Than has been that of yonder Deer,
I little dread so sad a fate."

LXVIII.

The Swan and the Drake.

Slowly, in majestic silence,
Sail'd a Swan upon a lake:
Round about him, never quiet,
Swam a noisy quacking Drake.

"Swan," exclaim'd the latter, halting,
"I can scarcely comprehend
Why I never hear you talking:
Are you really dumb, my friend?"

Said the Swan, by way of answer:
"I have wonder'd, when you make
Such a shocking, senseless clatter,
Whether you are deaf, Sir Drake!"

Better, like the Swan, remain in
Silence grave and dignified,
Than keep, drake-like, ever prating,
While your listeners deride.

LXIX.

The Gardener and his Ape.

A Gardener, somewhere in the East,
A hundred years ago at least,
Possess'd a very docile Ape,
As like to man in size and shape,
In habits and sagacity,
As any of his race might be.
So tame, indeed, had grown the brute,
He never stole his master's fruit,
Nor play'd such antics as we find
So prevalent in monkey-kind;
But rather strove, in all he could,
To use his talents for some good:
He kept the sparrows from the peas,
And guarded well the cherry-trees;
He drove the cats from beds of seed,
And sometimes even help'd to weed.
This creature's owner, every day
In summer, after dinner lay
Reposing in the shade some time
(A pleasant thing in Eastern clime).
The Monkey, squatting near his head,
Like nurse beside a patient's bed,
Would guard his sleep with watchful eyes,
And brush away intruding flies.

Once, as the Gardener in this style
Was dozing for a little while,
A big Bluebottle came along,
And pausing in his buzzing song,
Perch'd on the sleeper's ruddy nose,
Like bee upon a budding rose.
No sooner had the fly alit
Than Master Handy * made him flit ;
But, impudent as all his race,
The insect hover'd round the place,
And presently came bouncing back,
Resolved to try a fresh attack,
And settled on the Gardener's chin.
The Monkey flapp'd, with spiteful grin ;
Whereon the Fly but made a skip,
And lighted on the sleeper's lip.
This insolence roused Handy's rage,
And so, more furious than sage,
Clutching a pebble from the ground
(That might have weigh'd at least a pound),
With sudden blow, and angry cry,
He smash'd the aggravating Fly ;—
But as he did it, need I tell?
He broke his master's jaw as well.

This ancient Indian fable shows,
Rash friends may be as bad as foes.

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* The Ape may thus be named no less from his quadrumanal than his dexterous nature.

LXX.

The Lion, the Wolf, and the Fox.

King Lion caught a cold one day,
Which made him very ill;
And moaning in his den he lay,
As even monarchs will.

His courtiers throng'd to visit him,
And many stood around,
Attentive to his slightest whim,
In reverence profound.

Lord Wolf had come among the rest,
To watch beside the bed;
And feigning to be much distrest,
Full many tears he shed.

Meanwhile 'twas whisper'd round by some,
Who wish'd their zeal to show,
Not once Sir Renard yet had come
The Monarch's state to know.

"What's that you say?" the sufferer said:
"That rascal Fox not here!
For this neglect we'll have his head,
Unless good cause appear."

The Wolf, to Renard then a foe,
With ready guile replied:
"His absence cometh, sire, I know,
From insolence and pride."—

"Let him at once be hither brought!"
Exclaim'd the Lion then;
And so the Fox was quickly sought,
And hurried to the den.

His captors had inform'd him what
The Wolf had said of him;
But yet Sir Renard trembled not
Before the despot grim.

"Long live the King!" he said: "I grieve
To see him in this way;
But trust my efforts may relieve
My liege without delay."—

"Your efforts, knave!" the Lion cried;
But Renard meekly said:
"Believe me, sire, I am belied
By some about your bed:

"I come but now from pilgrimage
For your recovery;
Wherein I learn'd, from a great sage,
A certain remedy."—

"A remedy!" exclaim'd the King;
"Speak, Renard, and be quick!
'Tis what I want—the very thing;
"I'm tired of being sick."—

"The cure was this," the other said—
And half a grin he made—
"To wrap all warm about your head
A wolf-skin newly flay'd."

The King thought this a likely way,
And so he call'd the Bear,
His executioner, to flay
The Wolf before him there.

A man who practises deceit
To work another's ruin,
We cannot pity if he meet
With human Fox and Bruin.

LXXI.

The Silkworm and the Spider.

A group of insects sat one day
Conversing in a friendly way;
And happening in their talk to start
The subject of the textile art,

An Emmet said : "The Silkworm's skill
In spinning, I should think, would fill
The keenest critic with amaze.
What wondrous talent she displays!
It seems almost beyond belief,
That she from such a simple leaf
Can fashion threads so soft and fine,
That glitter in the sun and shine
Like golden threads;—and talk of gold,
Why, even men, from time untold,—
And all will grant they have some sense,—
Have thought the Silkworm's diligence
Prepares an ornament of worth
Surpass'd by few upon the earth."
The company in every word
She utter'd heartily concurr'd,
Except a Spider, who confess'd
She differ'd somewhat from the rest;
She had not found the Silkworm's thread
So fine and soft as had been said,
And it had many a slight defect
A close observer might detect.
On this, a Bee, who for a while
Was resting there, said, with a smile :
"Our friends must recollect that you,
The critic, are a spinner too."

Well for a man, if unsurvey'd
His work by rivals in his trade.

LXXII.

The Gazelle and her Friends.

Once on a time a young Gazelle
Lay very ill within a dell.
Her friends—not many then in all—
Came now and then to pay a call;
Would stay a while, be press'd to eat,
And find the grass so very sweet,
That soon their friendly visits grew
In number and duration too.
Each brought a friend, who brought his own,
Till many came, and none alone;
And thus, ere many days could pass,
They ate up all the neighbouring grass.
But all at once, when this was finish'd,
The number of the calls diminish'd,
Until few visitors were seen,
For periods short and far between.
Meanwhile the hapless patient found
No food remaining all around;
And having struggled hard in vain
To drag her weak limbs to the plain,
Lay down again with piteous moan,
And died of hunger there alone.

While men are rich like the Gazelle,
They lack not friends, if ill or well ;
But with the wealth these help too spend
Their friendship too will mostly end.]

LXXIII.

The Blacksmith and his Dog.

A certain Blacksmith had a Dog,
Who, lying near the forge all day,
Would sleep as soundly as a hog,
The while his master thump'd away.

But when the Smith sat down to dine,
At but the small noise of his jaws
The Dog would wake up with a whine,
And raise himself upon his paws.

"Sage brute," his owner one day said,
"Who, when the ground beneath thee quakes,
Wilt never deign to lift thy head,
Yet whom the teeth's light motion wakes.

"Some men might wisely copy thee,
Who, paying no regard to what
It would be well to hear or see,
Attend to what concerns them not."

LXXIV.

The Suicide and the Miser.

Fortune's acts are oft judicious,
Though we deem her so capricious,—
Changeable as wind or weather,
Void of justice altogether,—
Frowning, smiling, for a season,—
Suddenly, without a reason,
Turning sorrow into gladness,
Giving happiness for sadness.
Thus men commonly revile her;
Blind and fickle, too, they style her:
But I think her reputation
Suffers much from defamation:
Let the story that ensueth
Prove she sometimes wisely doeth.

To a man, not dull or vicious,
Was this goddess unpropitious;
Nor, in spite of all endeavour,
Had he won her kindness ever;
And he found himself and his reduced at last to want and mis'ry.
Tired of bearing any longer
Life in poverty and hunger,
He determined to escape hence,
And expended some few ha'pence

(Which he was obliged to borrow)
On a rope to end his sorrow,—
Thinking not, 'tis better suffer
Present pains than fly to rougher.
So the wretched man, deluded,
Hasten'd to a spot secluded,
Where some ruins stood, and clamber'd
Up upon a wall; then hammer'd
In a spike, and when he found it
Firm in, tied the rope around it;
Made a noose about his neck, and
Leaping forward, in a second
Of the world his leave had taken.
But the wall so rudely shaken,
Being rather old and crumbled,
Could not bear him—totter'd—tumbled!
Up he rose in some confusion
Suffering from a large contusion
On his head, and in displeasure
Gazed around—when, lo! a treasure!
Golden guineas did he view in
Hundreds lying 'mid the ruin.
Here was all that he had needed;
Spike and rope no more he heeded,
But with eager hand collected
All the coins that he detected;
Then, with bosom full and swelling,
Hasten'd to his humble dwelling,

Offering up his thanks to Heaven
For the boon which it had given.
After this good luck, 'tis said he
Lived contented, ever ready
With assistance large and speedy
For the aged, sick, and needy.

* * * * *

Now, the hider of the money
Was a Miser; but though none he
Ever spent, to view his treasure
Was his sordid mind's sole pleasure.
Presently he took it in his
Head to come and see his guineas.
When he found the gold had vanish'd,
Comfort from his soul he banish'd,
Wildly shriek'd, and tore his hair in
Horror, utterly despairing.
"Gold!" he cried, "that I so cherish'd—
For thy safety I'd have perish'd.
Curse the villain that bereft me
Of my darling coins, and left me
Nought on earth! I cannot bear it.
Oh, the wretch! could he not share it!
But, alas! 'tis no use crying;
Nought is left me now but dying."
Spike and rope he found all ready
To the wall, where less unsteady,

Fasten'd them (rejoicing when he
Thought they cost him not a penny);
Then crept up on hands and knees, and
Tied the rope around his weazand,
Took a plunge, and in a minute
Choking was suspended in it.

Thus his life he ended, giving
Wholesome warning to the living,
Who have money, to employ it,
If they would indeed enjoy it.
Those who spend it, sure are wiser
Than the greedy-handed miser,
Who adores but does not use it;
Ne'er enjoys, but fears to lose it;
From existence would be sunder'd
Rather than of gold be plunder'd.
On this lesson may you ponder;
Learn to spend, though not to squander.
Wisely use your wealth, then shall you
Know its veritable value.
Let not loss of money grieve you;
But if every shilling leave you,
Strive to win contentment, which is
Better far than untold riches.

LXXV.

The Ape in the Water.

An Ape had fallen off a tree
Whose branches overhung the sea ;
And, paddling hard with every hand,
Was struggling to regain the land.
But all in vain he strove, and tried
To swim against the ebbing tide :
He felt him sinking in the brine,
And then began to scream and whine :
"O Neptune, mighty Neptune, save
Thy servant from a watery grave !
Oh, save me, and I will adore
Thy gracious goodness evermore.
I'll offer thee the finest fruits,
And preach thy power to all the brutes,
Till over forest, hill, and plain,
Thou 'lt be revered as in the main.
Oh, help me, help me to escape,
And I will be a pious Ape !"
A billow came along, and bore
The frantic speaker close in shore ;
He clutch'd a bough above his head,
And, as he clamber'd up it, said :

"You need not trouble, Neptune, now ;
I'll save myself, and spare my vow !"

When health returns, thus often vain
Are vows men make on bed of pain.

LXXVI.

The Eagle and the Arrow.

An Eagle, pausing in his flight,
Perch'd on a craggy mountain-height.
A Hunter bent his deadly bow,
And laid the wingèd monarch low ;
Who, as he felt the pangs of death,
Exclaim'd, with feeble, ebbing breath :
"It were not half such pain to die,
But on this arrow I descry
A feather dropp'd from my own wing,
Which lends the dart a sharper sting."

'Tis hard to suffer wrong from those
A man has ever deem'd his foes ;
But harder if a former friend
His aid in injuring him should lend.

LXXVII.

The Flying-fish.

A Flying-fish, of tender age,
With his condition discontented,
Had met another, old and sage,
And thus to him his fate lamented:

"Alas, my venerable friend!
You find me grievously embarrass'd.
And quite unable to contend
With all the foes by whom I'm harass'd.

"I wonder you so long a space
Have managed to escape the dangers
Which threaten all our feeble race,
Surrounded by the fierce sea-rangers.

"For me, when mounting in the air,
The ocean-eagles rush to kill me;
And when the watery depths I dare,
The ravenous sharks with terror fill me."

The other said: "My bold young spark,
Both ways you seem to run on slaughter:
Since not an eagle or a shark,
Swim near the air, fly near the water."

LXXVIII.

The Nightingale and the Frogs.

"Sing again, sweet Nightingale!"
Cried a Shepherd in a vale,
On a lovely night in spring,
As the songster ceased to sing.
"Nay," replied the Nightingale,
"Who could listen to my tale,
While the Frogs, with voices harsh,
Croak so loud in yonder marsh?
All my music would be drown'd.
Don't you hear the shocking sound?"—
"Yes, I've heard it," said the Swain,
"Since you ended your sweet strain;
But while you were singing, I
Never knew that Frogs were nigh."

Sing on, favour'd sons of song:
Never heed the noisy throng
Of the vulgar, mire-born race,
Croaking at Parnassus' base;
For in vain they tire their throats,
While we hear your gushing notes.

LXXIX.

The Hermit, the Falcon, and the Raven.

A Hermit, who had fled the strife
Of men, and led a lonely life
Within a forest, as he stroll'd
One morning listless through the wold,
Beheld a Falcon on a tree,
Employ'd in feeding tenderly,
With flesh he carried in his beak,
An aged Raven, grey and weak.
"Oh, bounteous God!" the Hermit cried,
"Who can so wondrously provide
For his poor creatures' wants, and give
A bird unsought wherewith to live.
This miracle must surely be
Perform'd as a rebuke to me:
It shows me the great Power on high
Will all necessities supply,
If we await in confidence
The bounty of his providence.
Henceforth, no more I'll roam the wood
In needless search of daily food,
But calmly in my cell attend
What he for my support may send."
So on his couch the Hermit lay.
And waited on from day to day;
But none appear'd, to bring him aid,
And all in vain he hoped and pray'd.

Thus four days pass'd ; when, lo ! at night
An Angel stood before his sight,
And said : " O foolish man, and blind,
Who seekest here in sloth to find
What God has righteously ordain'd
By labour only should be gain'd,—
The Raven's case is none of thine,
And thou hast misconstrued the sign :
Know that the miracle was meant
To render thee less indolent.
Thou saw'st the vigorous Falcon feed
The helpless Raven : from his deed
Learn how mankind should help each other :
Go succour some poor feeble brother ;
Trust Providence, but tempt it not !"
He said, and vanish'd from the spot.

LXXX.

The Beautiful Flower.

Before the feather'd races from repose
One morning Ada with her mother rose,
And wander'd forth at dawn's first early rays,
While yet the flowers were gemm'd with dew,
Intent the rising sun to view,
And hear the waking birds trill forth their lays.
So fresh, so pure the air, so beautiful the ground !
At Ada's age what sweet delight 'tis found,

To view the verdant lea, the tinted sky,
And feel the balmy zephyrs floating by.
Ah! spring in spring of life is truly sweet!
So Ada's heart with pleasure wildly beat,
As blithely o'er the meadow-land she sped,
And up the mountain-side with fearless tread.
Her mother felt like pleasure, but subdued,
As nature's now renewing bloom she view'd.
The flowers were flourishing with new-born life,
Enamelling the sward, with fragrance rife;
And Ada, in her simple childish glee,
Was plucking blossoms all around;
But now a little one she found,
With tint as delicate as well might be.
She gather'd it: 'twas charming to the sight,
But, oh! its odour fill'd her with delight.
Admiring it awhile, she said in haste:
"Its sweetness is without alloy:
I fain would more of it enjoy;
I wonder if it has a pleasant taste;—
I'll try. Ah! what a nasty, horrid cheat,—
To be so bitter, and yet look so sweet!"—
"My child," the mother said, "blame not that flower,
Because to please each sense it has not power.
Has it not colours pleasant to the sight,
A lovely form, and scent that yields delight?
Blame but thyself, my Ada; thou shouldst know
That nought is truly perfect here below;
Then seek not from the things of earth
Such varied, never-failing worth."

LXXXI.

The Crow and the Gods.

A Crow lay very ill in bed,—
In fact, next door to dying:
Her mother stood beside in dread,
Continually crying.

"I beg you," said the invalid,
"Instead of weeping mother,
For succour in this hour of need
Implore some god or other."

The parent said: "What deity
Would grant the prayer, I wonder!
Can you name one whose altars we
Have never chanced to plunder?"

When in dislike with all mankind
A man's misdeeds have made him,
He scarcely can expect to find
A friend in need to aid him.

LXXXII.

The Hunter, the Fox, and the Leopard.

In Hindostan, one day of yore,
A Hunter spied a Fox, who bore
So sleek a coat, he long'd to win
The animal's undamaged skin.
So, pondering how he might contrive
Some scheme to capture him alive,
Unseen he watch'd him to his den,
And stay'd till he came forth again ;
Then at the entrance dug a pit,
And lightly spreading over it
Some slender sticks, and leaves, and grass,
Laid on, against the Fox should pass,
A piece of lamb's flesh for a bait.
This done, he hid himself, to wait
The issue of his cunning plan ;
But in an hour or so began
To weary of his watch, and laid
Him down to rest beneath the shade
Of some thick trees that hard-by grew,
And fell asleep before he knew,
To dream, throughout a troubled slumber,
Of catching foxes without number.
The Fox, returning while he slept,
To reach his cover softly crept ;

And when he spied the piece of meat,
Had great desire to taste the treat ;
But still, suspicious of some guile,
He look'd around a little while,
And marking symptoms of a snare,
Resolved to seek another lair.
Scarce had the Fox departed, when
A hungry Leopard pass'd the den,
Beheld the flesh upon the ground,
And sprang upon it with a bound.
The sticks gave way as he alit,
And down he fell into the pit.
The noise aroused the man, who thought
This surely was the prey he sought ;
And so, without a glance below,
He leapt into the trench, when, oh !
The Leopard clutch'd him with his claws,
And tore him up with ravenous jaws.

See caution in the Fox avail,
And rashness in the Leopard fail,
A lurking danger to detect ;
Then in your actions recollect
The miserable Hunter's fate,
And be not too precipitate ;
And learn, in traps that they prepared
For others men have oft been snared.

LXXXIII.

The Horse, the Boar, and the Man.

One day the Horse had come to drink
At his accustom'd pool;
But as he stood upon the brink,
To sip the water cool,—

He found a Boar lay wallowing there,
Who made the fluid foul;
On which a quarrel 'twixt the pair
Began with neigh and growl.

Perhaps they might at once have fought
But for the Pig's huge teeth,
For which the Horse discreetly thought
His skin should prove no sheath.

So off he canter'd to the Man
For help against his foe,
And told him of a certain plan
To work his overthrow.

The Man upon his back should sit,
And cast his arrows thence;
And when the Boar the dust had bit,
He'd be his recompense.

To this the Man at once agreed,
And made the Horse a rein ;
Then vaulted on his willing steed,
And trotted o'er the plain.

The Boar, astonish'd at the sight,
Away in terror ran ;
But presently his headlong flight
Was shorten'd by the Man.

Now, when the Boar on earth lay dead,
The Horse would fain be free :
" Pray, sir, take off this rein," he said,
" For much it troubles me."—

" Nay, that I will not do, my friend,"
The Cavalier replied ;
" For now thy use I comprehend,
I'll keep thee fast to ride."

Small wrongs 'tis better to endure,
Than yield our liberty
To some strong neighbour, to procure
Revenge for injury.

LXXXIV.

The Fox and the Grapes.

One sultry day, a long time past,
A Fox who'd travell'd far and fast,
And suffer'd now from thirst intense,
Was passing by a vineyard fence,
O'er which a loaded vine-branch hung.
When Renard saw it up he sprung
To seize the tempting fruit, but found
He'd made by far too short a bound.
He jump'd again with all his might,
But could not touch the clusters quite ;
And many leaps he made, but each
By some few inches fail'd to reach.
Then as among the boughs he heard,
The tittering laugh of many a bird,
Who, feasting on the luscious spoil,
Was mocking at his *fruitless* toil,
He said, with supercilious air :
"On close inspection, I declare,
The grapes look very green and small,
And would not suit my taste at all.
I could not eat such things as these,
Or I might get at them with ease.
When they are ripe, some other day,
I'll have them, if I pass this way."

Hence people say, "The grapes are sour,"
When in attempt beyond his pow'r
A man is baffled, and then feigns
The object is not worth his pains.

LXXXV.

The Lioness and the Wildcat.

A Lioness and Wildcat, meeting,
Exchanged a very courteous greeting,
And fell into a conversation,
Which chanced to turn on population;
Wherein the Cat express'd some wonder,
That though herself had seldom under
Her ten or dozen young ones yearly,
Her friend, she understood, had merely
Through all her life, some half a dozen.
The other said: "I grant it, cousin;
Still, if I only had one scion,—
Consider, it would be a Lion."

Learn, O prolific verse-inditers,
And fashionable-novel-writers,
Who with your dull and misty vapour
Discolour reams on reams of paper,
With which our library-shelves are cumber'd,
That men's works should be weigh'd, not number'd.

LXXXVI.

The Pilgrim and the King.

A Pilgrim, to a distant country bound,
As night approach'd, and darkness gather'd round,
Lay down beneath a palace-porch to rest,
His staff beside, his cloak around him prest.
The King, perceiving him, thus sternly cried:
"Begone! no longer slumbering here abide!
Pursue thy way, or seek another bed;
Nor 'neath my palace dare to lay thy head,
As 'twere a lodging-house." The old man eyed
The royal speaker calmly, and replied:
"How many here before thyself have reign'd?"—
"Two hundred monarchs have these walls contain'd."—
"And were these rulers of a single line,
All ancestors direct of thee or thine?"—
"No; thirty dynasties have worn the crown,
Exalted by the people or put down;
And as each king his reign has signalized
By virtuous deeds or tyranny,
Has he been honour'd ever, or despised
And driven forth to infamy."—
"Well, then," the Pilgrim said, "this place I deem,
Where stranger guests so oft have reign'd supreme,
No palace, but an hostelry."

Some things that differ totally in name,
In nature may be very much the same.

LXXXVII.

The Fly and the Bull.

One day a Fly, with heat opprest,
Upon a Bull's horn sat to rest;
But fearing lest so great a load
The animal might incommode,
In courteous accent she inquired
If of her weight the Bull felt tired.
"Who speaks?" replied the bellowing throat;
"I thought I heard some insect's note,
But know not where, nor what it said."—
"'Twas I that spoke—here, on your head,"
Said Madam Fly. "I fear'd my weight
Upon your horn might be too great.
If so, you've but the word to say,
And I at once will fly away."—
"Nay," said the Bull, "excuses spare:
Till now I knew not you were there;
I feel you not, and shall not know
How long you stay, or when you go."

In human form how many flies
Are apt to overrate their size.

LXXXVIII.

The Dog and the Donkey.

One morning, at the break of day,
A rustic, on a journey bound,
Had started forth upon his way,
Attended by his Ass and Hound.

The Donkey trudged with steady pace,
But ever straight along the track:
The Dog began a nimble race
For half a mile, and then ran back.

He started swiftly off again,
Retraced his footsteps as before;
Then coursed in circles o'er the plain,
And lengthen'd every mile to four.

When half the journey thus was run,
The Dog lay panting in the grass;
But just as when he'd first begun,
And still unwearied, went the Ass.

Now, reader, say—which travell'd best?
Was it the Dog, of pace so fleet;
Or his companion, who progrest
With slow, but sure and sober feet?

LXXXIX.

Æsop and the Blockhead.

A BLOCKHEAD, strolling through the street
One day, with Æsop chanced to meet,
At whom, from wantonness or spite,
He threw a stone with all his might,
And struck the wise man on the arm,
Who show'd not anger or alarm,
But from his pocket sixpence drew,
And said: "I grieve I cannot offer you
A larger sum, for I am poor;
But if you will, you may ensure
By such a deed a good reward.
See, hither comes a noble lord;
Now, throw at him without delay,
And handsomely no doubt he'll pay."
The dolt did as the sage advised,
But was unpleasantly surprised
To find himself convey'd to jail,
And sent for trial without bail.

Though doing wrong for once succeed,
To grief at last 'twill surely lead.

XC.

The Wolf and the Stork.

A Wolf, who had been forced to keep
A rather lengthy fast,
Contrived to carry off a sheep
To make a meal at last.

But as, rejoicing o'er his luck,
He gobbled up the mutton,
A bone fast in his gullet stuck,
And nearly choked the glutton.

He struggled hard, and cough'd, and retch'd,
And roll'd about in pain;
His neck he twisted, strain'd, and stretch'd,
But found it all in vain.

Then to the animals around
He hurried for relief,
But not a single one was found
Who could assist the thief.

At last he saw a Stork come by,
And begg'd, in stifled tone,
That with her slender neck she'd try
To rid him of the bone.

He vow'd she should be richly fee'd
For granting his request:
Believing him, the Stork agreed
At once to do her best.

The Wolf lay down against a tree,
And meekly cross'd his paws:
The Stork, advancing timidly,
Approach'd his reeking jaws;

Then thrust her long neck down his throat,
And forced the bone away;
Demanding, in respectful note,
The stipulated pay.

"Fool!" said the Wolf, "you must be mad
To seek reward of me;
I think you rather should be glad
I let your neck go free."

'Tis thus a knave will recompense
His succourer in need:
Not thanks you gain, but insolence,
From him for kindly deed.

XCI.

The Jasmine and the Wallflower.

Amid the foliage of a garden-bower
Conceal'd, there twined a Jasmine-flower,
From tiny blossoms purely white
Exhaling odours day and night;
And close beside, in stately pride,
Arose a wallflower brightly dyed,
Which, vain of vulgar beauty, oft
At plainer flowers around it scoff'd,
And to the Jasmine, 'mid the rest,
One day its taunting speech addrest:
"O thou neglected, worthless weed,
'Tis well thou hidest thee, indeed!
Pray, how presume to me so near
A simple form like thine to rear?—
To me, in matchless mantle dight,
With gold and purple richly bright?
Behold, a maiden hither hies!
Afar my beauty she espies,
And comes at once to gather me,
Whom to desire is but to see.
By her shall I be cull'd and prized;
But thou, unnoticed or despised,
Wilt wither in obscurity."
Thus spake the vain flower haughtily;
The other still more sweetly shed
Its fragrance round, but nothing said.

The maiden came ; a zephyr sweet
Betray'd the gentle flower's retreat.
Aside the tangled leaves she drew
Until the Jasmine met her view ;
And, raptured with its perfume rare,
The blossoms pluck'd to grace her hair ;
Then in her glee quick turning round,
She trod the Wallflower to the ground,
Which first had gazed in wroth disdain,
But now lay weeping in its pain.

The vain, at modest worth who rail,
May learn a lesson from my tale.

XCII.

The Boy in the Stream.

A LITTLE boy, while leaning down to drink,
Fell in a stream, and soon began to sink.
A man, in passing, heard him as he cried
For aid, and running to the river-side,
Began to scold the boy with all his might
For getting into such a dangerous plight.
"Oh, save me—save me first!" the child replied,
"And then there will be time enough to chide."

Of men in trouble we may say the same :
Assist them first and gain the right to blame.

XCIII.

The Two Travellers and the Oyster.

Two Travellers, in times of yore,
Pass'd near the sea one day,
And saw by chance where on the shore
A stranded oyster lay.

To seize it one directly ran,
And all his muscles strain'd;
But past him push'd the other man,
And so the prize obtain'd.

"The fish is mine," the other cried:
"I saw it first, I'd swear."—
"Before you saw," his friend replied,
"I smelt it lying there."—

"Then with the smell remain content,
And yield the taste to me."
And thus they wrangled as they went
Whose should the oyster be.

But 'mid their strife at length they spied
A stranger drawing near,
Of aspect grave and dignified,
As of a judge severe.

To him the quarrel they referr'd,
And stated each his claim,
Which patiently enough was heard,
And then the judgment came.

He took the oyster in his hand,
And open'd it with care;
While both his face intently scann'd,
To read his purpose there.

Then much, I ween, to their surprise,
Ere they had seen it well,
He ate the fish before their eyes,
And handed each a shell.

"This judgment doth the court award,"
He said with accent gay,
"And bids you live in good accord;"
Then wish'd the pair good day.

By litigation a dispute
Grows oft from bad to worse:
The gold is swallow'd in the suit;
You gain an empty purse.

XCIV.

The Lion and the Ass.

"King Lion," said the Fox, "you know
My zeal for you was never slow;
I make your interests my own,
And check each insult to your throne:
So, when I hear your foes traduce
Your Majesty with vile abuse,
I never fail to tell you, Sire,
That they may feel your royal ire.
The Ass of late, in traitorous speech,
Has dared your virtues to impeach.
He says he cannot think what I
Can see in you to magnify.
He calls your courage into doubt,
And will not hear a word about
Your equity and lofty mind.
He says to justice you are blind;
You fear the strong, but on the weak
Your spite for slight offences wreak."
The King stood silent for a while;
Then answer'd, with a haughty smile:
"Fox, let him babble as he may,
I cannot heed a Donkey's bray."

XCV.

The Bee and the Tomtit.

HERE and there about a garden,
Planted out with flowers gay,
Buzz'd a Bee extracting honey
Out of all upon her way.

"Bee," exclaim'd a twittering Tomtit,
Perch'd upon the garden wall,
"Poison lurks in many blossoms,
Yet thou gatherest from all."—

"True," she answer'd, "I discover
Sweets in flowers of every kind:
Poison may be present with them;
But I leave that all behind."

It were well if human beings
Always acted like the Bee,
By retaining in their memory
But the good they hear or see.

XCVI.

The Horse and the Ass.

"Friend," said an Ass, with whom a Horse
Was condescending to discourse,
"I find a great affinity
Of race betwixt yourself and me.
Akin in form, I imitate
Your habits also, and your gait."—
"But still I think," replied the Steed,
"We come of very different breed:
You copy us, but never knew
A Horse that imitated you."

A man may mimic great men's style,
And be a donkey all the while.

XCVII.

The Nightingale and the Cuckoo.

The Nightingale sang out one day,
To see how men esteem'd his lay.
The boys who play'd around the spot,
Kept playing on, and heeded not.

Meanwhile, a Cuckoo, sitting by,
Gave forth his inharmonious cry.
This drew a shout from all the boys,
Who then stood listening for the noise,
And as it came would copy after,
Or greet the sound with merry laughter.
"Hear you?—mankind receive me well,"
Said Cuckoo then to Philomel.
"Your singing may be very fine;
But surely it must yield to mine,
For unremark'd you tune your song,
While I win plaudits from the throng."
The warbler ceased his thrilling lay,
And sat indignant on his spray.
* * * * * *
Two lovers pass'd: unmoved they heard,
And noticed not the boastful bird;
But when the Nightingale again
Began a soft melodious strain,
They started, stood awhile to hear,
Then sat down on a hillock near;
And while the maiden own'd the spell
By rapturous tears that gently fell
Adown her cheeks, the youth confest
His sympathy with heaving breast.
The singer paused, and meekly said
To the vain Cuckoo overhead:
"Think not I envy you the loud
And thoughtless plaudits of the crowd:

The silent tears my music draws
Are more to me than all applause."

The writer who can move the heart
Fulfils a better, nobler part,
Than he who merely wields his pen
To raise a passing laugh in men.

XCVIII.

Merops.

"I've something else to ask you yet,"
Said a young Eagle, who had met
A learned Owl at close of day.
"There is a bird, I've heard men say,
Call'd Merops, who is seen to rise
With tail directed to the skies,
And head bent ever toward the ground:
Is such a creature to be found?"—
"No," said the sage, "man never knew
A bird that so uncouthly flew:
The only Merops is his mind,
Which up to heaven would wing its flight,
Yet never of the earth lose sight."

XCIX.

The Rose and the Tomb.

Thus of the Rose the Tomb inquired :
"Of the soft dew of eventide
What makest thou, O flower admired ?"
Thus to the Tomb the Rose replied :
"What makest thou of those that sink
Down through thy ever-yawning brink ?"

And further said : "O sombre Tomb,
Sweet honey of that dew I make,
Here in the shadow of my bloom."—
"O Queen of Flowers"—the Tomb then spake—
"Of each pure soul that hither hies
I make an angel for the skies!"

C.

The Lark in the Cage.

In the dusty, smoky city,
Hung a Lark against a wall,
Warbling out a cheerful ditty,
Heedless of his cage's thrall.

"Lark!" exclaim'd a chirping Sparrow,
Lighting on a window-sill,—
"Prison'd in a space so narrow,
Canst thou sing so blithely still?"

Said the Lark, in accents ringing:
"Sparrow, I would have you know
That a Lark in bondage, singing,
Half forgets his weary woe.

"Sang I not, too, here in prison,—
Were I to escape some day,
In the sky when I had risen,
Should I recollect my lay?"

Soul, confined in shell external,
Art thou not a radiant spark
From the Spirit Light supernal,
Prison'd like the tuneful Lark?

Let thy spirit-song, to cheer thee
In captivity, arise
Unforgot, till angels hear thee
Chant it far above the skies.

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